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# THE JAPANESE AT HOME



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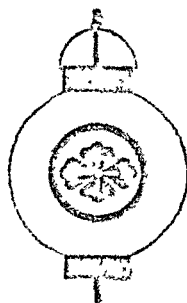
*Some Intimate Sketches of Life  
and Personalities*

BY  
IPPEI FUKUDA

*Author of "Sketches of Men and Life," Associate Editor of  
"Contemporary Japan"*

WITH THE PREFACE BY  
DON BROWN

*News Editor,  
The Japan Advertiser*



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**MAHARANA BHUPAL  
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## PREFACE

The English-speaking world has long known periodicals that confine their contents to material concerning a single country or geographical division, but not until the past few years has it seen so many devoted to one nation or part of the world as have come into existence to disseminate information about Japan and the Far East, reflecting their own interest in being known and understood—not a few of them are published in Japan—and the interest of American, British and other English-speaking readers in learning more about them. Many of them have been fortunate in having as a regular contributor Fukuda San, and the name of this seasoned toiler in the revelation to foreigners of new aspects of his country has become so familiar in tables of contents that there is scarcely need for an introduction to this third gathering between permanent covers of his essays, articles and stories.

With his lack of pretension, he would probably tell you that he writes to make a living. For many years, he was with the *Asahi*, the greatest of Japanese newspapers, and a newspaper worker more often than not looks upon his writing as little except what he must do in order to justify receipt of his salary. Whether conscious of it or not, however, Fukuda San writes mainly because he is stimulated by people, events and scenes around him and wants to tell others about them. There is a groove that

circumstances have made many Japanese writers in English feel that they must follow, the groove of assertion, expostulation and rationalization. Fukuda San has kept out of it. He is no less eager than others to have foreigners understand and like his country, but instead of throwing himself into strained arguments that neither attract nor convince he succeeds where the others fail by writing informally of what may be described as the "human" aspects of Japan, communication of which helps to replace the usual concept abroad of his country as a militaristic or industrial machine with realization that it is made up of men, women and children who face hardships and difficulties, more or less like those faced in other lands, and yet lead lives not barren of amenities and ideals.

In addition to the fortunate field in which he has chosen to write, Fukuda San differs from most of his countrymen who address their writings to English-speaking readers in his way of thinking and manner of presentation. In school, he studied English, but so have many others. He has lived briefly in New York, but other Japanese have had even longer opportunities to observe the American or British mind at close range. However he may have acquired it, he has learned what is taught in American university English composition courses as an effective method of thought, avoidance of generalizations that cannot be broken into the details that give them meaning and perception of the generalizations that can be drawn from related details. In other words, he has escaped the stringing together of vague generalizations which the writings of so many Japanese give the impres-



sion is the normal method of Japanese thought. This is not to imply that Fukuda San ceases to be a Japanese and becomes a foreigner with exceptional advantages of access to his material when he writes. What he has attained, as the contents of this book well illustrates, is the ability to communicate what interests him to readers of other lands in terms that are common to both him and them. In such communication lies one of the greatest hopes for minimizing the dampening effects of national peculiarities on mutual existence.

Fukuda San is still a young writer in the field he has chosen since leaving newspaper work. His friends trust that this third volume of his writings will be followed by many more.

DON BROWN

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

This talking about ourselves in a foreign language reminds us of ghosts. At moments of nervous tension, the spooks described in books can seem frightfully alive, and so much freedom of movement is given them throughout the pages that the nervous reader is likely to lose peace of mind unless he makes the most of that thin but impenetrable partition that seems to keep mortals and ex-mortals apart. When one finds himself in the presence of visitors from the unfamiliar world, it is a good thing to remember this thin partition or veil, but it must also be remembered that its advantages for human beings are its disadvantages for ghosts. Writers of ghost stories tell of frightened men recoiling from an inhospitable spirit without feeling its twitching hands; they also tell of a spirit of more friendly disposition being denied the pleasure of a warm handshake with a former friend in flesh and blood.

There seem to be no advantages, however, in the medium of a foreign language. Realities that are sharply outlined in the writer's mind become blurred or crippled in the eyes of those on the other side. A sense of apartness hangs on as doggedly as the reputed fog of London. Yet the author hopes that in this book may be found a rent, even though of only a few square inches, in the eternal veil of estrangement.

Grateful acknowledgements are due to Mr. Take-

tora Ogata, editor of the *Asahi*, for the bulk of the sketches which have appeared from time to time in *Japan in Pictures*, an *Asahi* publication; to Mr. Richard J. Walsh, editor of *Asia*, for "Some Aspects of the Japanese Mind"; to Mr. Kimpei Sheba, of *The Japan Times*, for "The Canine Loyalty of Hachi-koh" and to the Imperial Japanese Government Railways for "Magic Ashes."

IPPEI FUKUDA

Tokyo

August 30, 1936

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## I. *Some Aspects of the Japanese Mind*

"HAS it ever occurred to you," writes an art critic whose opinion commands wide respect in Japan, "that men have always scored over women by a long chalk in painting lovely women?" Obviously enough, he says, it would seem no easy task for a woman painter to step back from what she is or stands for and set about vivisectioning, reconstructing and idealizing those qualities to which she is an heir as a member of the sex. The observation may account, with perhaps more truth, for the very incisiveness of portrayal of the Japanese mind by foreign writers.

After overcoming the first obstacle, a Japanese observer of himself, now in the position of a stranger, will have to reckon with one of the most baffling of national traits—a common disposition of his race to present himself, his family or his worldly possessions in as sorry a light as possible. In angling for a job for a son, a Japanese father would refer to the young man as "a swine of a son." Strange though it may sound, one gathers

from such porcine association a paternal affection as well as the general culture of the correspondent. "My thorny wife asks me to send you regards" should hurt nobody's feelings. Nor would it be wise for you to spurn a package from your Japanese friend even if you are warned by the accompanying letter that the gift was picked up, quite casually, from a pile of junk and that it should prove utterly useless in your possession. Still wider of the mark would you be if you regarded such protestations as a persiflage of sham modesty without suspecting the existence of a strong undercurrent toward as much belittlement of ego as one can achieve. Japanese, as individuals, have none of the airs of arrogance; self-effacement is as pronounced a hallmark of good breeding as of servitude. They are ready to admit their faults, sins, imperfections—so much so that they appear ever so apologetic even where no apologies are justly called for.

One becomes aware of a sharp contrast between the Japanese and the Chinese on this score. The safest and easiest approach to a comparison—and most delicate in face of so many common contacts of the one people with the other—may be found in history. The Chinese treasure in their hearts, and that with reason, the glories of



the days when they led the rest of the world in literature, art and philosophy. I do not mean to say that they swagger and hold their noses high where the Japanese mince and bow. The difference in point goes much deeper than that. The Chinese mind holds on to a fixed mooring—a strong faith in the essential rightness and superiority of the Chinese to most others as individuals—which rolling centuries have been powerless to cut adrift.

The Japanese, regardless of sporadic civil wars in the Middle Ages, have maintained their racial homogeneity and have looked up to the Throne, even at the lowest ebb in its prestige, rather as a spiritual force making for national stability. With their thought governed in the main by this guiding principle, they have acquired a general outlook on life whereby individualism has not received much encouragement. A constant menace or bugbear arising from the existence of “tricky” aliens next door or in their midst might have put them more on their guard and made them more self-assertive. Or a breath-taking spectacle—like that of a powerful dynasty in possession of a high civilization sinking abruptly into forgetfulness, as rivers in a desert of sand are known to meander and finally to disappear—might have developed stouter

self-reliance. Moreover, protection of their own interests has never loomed so large on their mental horizon as to become the sole, dominant, un-failing hub in the body politic. These and other phases in Japan's history could have had but one inevitable effect in shaping the Japanese mind, namely, reducing the ego. Consequently, it is pliant and open to outside suggestions.

The statement should naturally lay bare another well-known vein running through all strata of the Japanese mind. I mean the characteristic readiness with which Japan has fallen in step with one form of foreign culture after another. Buddhism came to Japan by way of China in 552 A.D., making an easy and almost complete conquest of our people soon after its arrival. The teachings of Confucius gained as easy an access to and made as lasting an impression on the intellectuals of old Japan. Though considerably belated in coming, western culture not only captivated the past two or three generations but seems destined to live on inextricably interwoven in the texture of the present as well as future generations. To put it roughly, Buddhism began to wane with the *début* here of the more animating and clearcut western thought and will soon fade away. It may linger on among the conservative middle class. As for

Confucius, only a negligible group of highbrows on the wintry side of middle age would now respond to his call. Needless to say, however, these receding tributaries to the main current of our mind are bound to leave not a few lasting traces behind them.

It is easy to see that at times confusion of thought cropped up in minds exposed to more than one foreign culture at a time. Had it not been for the people's love of simplicity in all fields of life, they might have been overwhelmed by the jumble of conflicting thoughts.

A Japanese poet in a fit of inspiration becomes extremely laconic. His creative Muse has taught him to boil down his poetic fancy to the seventeen-syllable *haiku* or, if he must be voluble, to the thirty-one-syllable *waka*. The shrunken petals of salted cherry blossom uncurl themselves in a cup of warm tea until in a minute they re-ëffloresce in all their freshness of colour and shape. But it does not take even a fraction of a second before a *haiku* in just seventeen syllables germinates in our mind with all its beauty, imagery and force of expression. Economy of words in the Japanese text whets, instead of crippling, our response to its breath. To quote Basho (1644-1694), the best known of *haiku* poets :

"Ah, summer grasses wave!  
The warriors' brave deeds a dream."

Unusually vivid is the picture raised before us: a field desolate but for a shrine or two in a rueful condition of neglect. Wild grass running riot everywhere under the spent sun of a summer afternoon is strangely reminiscent of *samurai*, officers and men, who fought, dreamed of home, and fell in this same field centuries ago. The reaction is instantaneous.

This can be said, with equal truth, of our appreciation of art: the same subtle process of simplification is as fully at work there as in this form of poetry. Japanese landscape artists often dispose of their favourite theme, bamboos, with almost abject economy of touches. And yet those few brush strokes in black readily bring to our eyes a cluster of the vegetation in its refreshingly radiant colour.

The relentless pursuit of simplicity has brought us both advantages and disadvantages. Limitation in speech can deny disputants an opportunity to get their controversial points threshed out in fairness and in full. A street fight staged in Tokyo always gets under way without a decent prologue of wranglings and usually offers as little in the way of closing remarks. Two Chinese in the same

bellicose frame of mind would exhaust their pros and cons before, during and after their fisticuffs. On May 15, 1932, the unfortunate Premier, Mr. T. Inukai, was shot to death in cold blood by assassins. "Young man," said the dying statesman, "there is nothing really askew with our country. Let me explain—" But he was not allowed to explain. He died a victim of cruel simplicity. In such tragic deaths the victim has no time to convince the killer of his fallacies.

In view of this characteristic simplicity of ours, Theodore Dreiser's description, in *An American Tragedy*, of the agony of a young man wavering between his desire for a girl and his duty to his mother in distress makes interesting reading for us. In like circumstances, a Japanese son even in despair would never dream of leaving his mother in the lurch: he knows by instinct that he should go first to her. There is no evading his deep-rooted, simple, traditional way of looking at things. It is in his blood. No matter how black his record in other contacts with life, he cannot act differently.

Singleness of loyalty to the Throne is as much in evidence. There are a good number of liberals in Japan who have no nonsense about democracy as the only worth while paradise on earth. It is

there, they contend, that their intellectual forces and longings will be given the most liberal measure of free play and, therefore, the utmost in contentment. From the cradle up to the time little scholars finish their elementary education at thirteen years of age, the Japanese have as persistently inculcated into them a standardized conception of good citizenship as is the practice elsewhere in the world and, above all, citizenship under the rule of the Imperial Family. Because of the very thoroughness of training in this vein and also because of the compactness of the nation, simplicity of thought gains strength and permeates all classes of people. The fact that nowhere in our nation's history does one find wild disruptions in its train of thought centring on the Throne goes far to obviate or discount contemporary differences of opinion on the matter among some intellectuals. It is obvious that higher education tends to defy any simplification of ideas, yet theories have not gathered enough momentum to throw our distinctive type of mind into a confusion beyond easy understanding.

By far the most disturbing aspect is our surrender to westernization. The conservatives see in it a menace to our proud simplicity of thought. That the people of today are willing to think and

amuse themselves and live much in line with western peoples, the conservatives agree among themselves, certainly spells a disaster more far-reaching than liberal education. For the moment, the defenders of the Japanese purity of thought fail to recall the period when Buddhism, Chinese literature, Chinese ethics and the Chinese way of life generally were as popular as an air from the latest "talkie" is today.

Apart from our age-old fealty to Throne and Home, we have hardly felt it so very imperative or worth while to have a fixed mooring and to hang on to it for all we are worth. Somewhere at the back of our mind there still remains a memory of our prehistoric existence, of a highly heterogeneous character in race, ideas and mode of living. Fortunately, the founders of the nation demonstrated their tact in hitting an ideal balance, bringing harmony out of the welter of differences. Not infrequently, politicians found in an imported culture a handy scapegoat to blame for a popular unrest which, in their opinion, would recur from time to time and on the trail of any alien culture incompatible with our love of simplicity. And again we feel a stir in our subconscious mind: it is a stir of impatience with the senile critics. We admire relics of old art but certainly have no use

for static minds. The Japanese mind knows how to take care of itself and how to keep young. It takes almost anything in life moderately, its joys, its sorrows and even westernization. Being exceptionally simple and malleable in structure, it cannot bring itself to put up with anything static. It prefers to knock about restlessly rather than to gather dust and become old.



## II. Kimono—How It Fares in Modern Life

THE fascination of the kimono—often pronounced “kimona” in America—calls for no explanation really. Along with other hundred per cent. things Japanese, like “geisha” and “jinrikisha” or “rikisha” for short, the word receives an accurate enough definition in almost any English dictionary. Its enunciation at once suggests femininity. In boudoir scenes in foreign films ladies expectant or disturbed are shown making for the door while throwing on a kimono in a hurry. Although I, like anybody else in Japan, grew into manhood in kimono, I have always felt that they were essentially meant for women. Without the harmony in diversity of colour and effects which our dress presents, Japanese girls would as surely recede into a blur as New York would if shorn of its imposing skyline.

It is true that our girls in ever-increasing numbers have come to favour foreign dress. Most of them working in offices are found in foreign-styled dresses, and it is compulsory for those who

attend schools to wear some uniform or other. But underneath the lambent craze for "yofuku," our womenfolk, old or young, are as kimono-minded as their mothers used to be. To anyone skeptical of the remark, festive occasions, particularly New Year's Day, should come as an eye-opener. Again, how different and how strikingly lovelier elevator-operators look in their kimono! And how feminine they have suddenly become in the grace of their native costume! They don't look at all the same brusque girls of a day before who had about them the rush and curtness of their sisters abroad during the whirling business hours. The kimono has now tempered their rapid, monosyllabic responses to a polite, purring undertone, which is, needless to observe, more becoming to their holiday best. The usual "step lively" signal in their eyes has given way overnight to a coy, wistful light. Their dualism in dress, it should be noted, has spelt a terror to many a Japanese parent blessed, to put it mildly, with a daughter or two. To provide young ladies with two so hopelessly different kinds of clothes is known to make a serious inroad into the pocket of the paternal bread-winner.

Any comparison between Western dress and kimono would occur to the open-minded judge of

sartorial niceties to be incomplete without taking stock of this broad, fundamental difference: the charms of the western dress are more obvious in comparison with those of the kimono. A well-dressed American lady, for example, captivates the eyes of persons at sight. She does not have to have the dainty touches of her dress pried at with microscopic scrutiny to be admired, as its full effect seems to reveal itself at a glance. From the top of a meandering bus along Riverside Drive, one can almost pay tribute to the excellent taste of a hostess at tea as seen through the curtained window of her apartment. I do not mean to say that charms of Western dress, like delicate flowers, wither on exposure and recoil from critical eyes at close range. On the contrary, any Japanese with trained eyes would, in my opinion, do fuller justice to a display of art in a mode, be it foreign or native, than Western connoisseurs. The reason is that the colour, design, balancing of contrasts into harmony, etc. of the kimono are more intensive.

Now take a Japanese lady dressed in winter fashion. As often as not, a casual visitor from foreign shores runs the risk of taking her for a hunchback because of the bow of her brocade "obi" which the "haori" hides from sight. In

nine cases out of ten, the "obi" tied just above the waist-line is brighter in tone with its embroidered designs and bold colour effect than the rest of her dress when she slips off the black silk "hori," only relieved by her family crest in white. One is startled therefore by the elegance of the well-sized bow. Not infrequently, it presents a Japanese painter's conception of flowers, landscape or birds done by needles instead of a brush. Plum blossoms in silver resting on boughs in gold embroidery come out in a delightful relief on the dark ground of the season's "obi" which is on display at every leading department store in Japan. At a Ginza emporium I stood for a long time admiring another which showed a snow-laden plum tree with a hint of coming spring thrown across it by means of a poem inscribed in flowing Japanese script—all embroidered. They are works of art not unlike those shown at the Imperial Art Exhibitions. There is yet another "obi" which, I should imagine, would prove irresistible to any woman with good taste and of means. It has a winding stream bearing down some maple leaves in a brighter colour. These three will adorn with propriety ladies between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-five. But it is difficult to draw an age-line along the borders of sobriety for pre-middle

age and of gaiety for the younger set, for women in both provinces have their own mysterious preferences. Besides, the Western distaste of looking old has invaded the East, making the task all the more risky.

Not long ago attempts were made by creators of fashion at introducing modernity into patterns in kimono. The most adventurous of them saw to it that cupids in a good number were allowed to run riot all over a "haori," while others succumbed to the passing Mah-jong mania and strewed pieces of the Chinese chess on the ember ground of the kimono proper. Innovations of the kind came and went but never stayed long. Women have a very redoubtable sense of what is chic and what is not, and they would stick to it regardless of the tyranny of fashion dictators.

Geisha girls, well-dressed as they are, ceased to set a new fashion. Today, the sceptre of authority on the matter is in the hands of big department stores. As far as I know there is no specific channel through which a "creation" is made to flow and swell into popularity. The stage or geisha, or both, may accelerate the tempo once set in motion, but they have no longer much say in determining its worth. The notable drift in the seat of power, however, does not alter the fact

that our theatre people and geisha are the best kimonoed persons among us. In the company of a few select members of geisha one cannot repress one's fears of disaster on seeing them in foreign dress in some nondescript future. For myself, I have always maintained that even if they do not set a new mode, the pretty entertainers have sedulously upheld and enriched as no one else could have done the art of donning the kimono with finesse. A trifle overdressed in winter in fact, but her several layers of kimono are so wonderfully in keeping with one another that she strikes a good form notwithstanding. She looks even more attractive in the well-chosen combination of artistic touches. You are given an opportunity to take stock of what she wears as she bows before pouring saké into your cup. Around her neck is seen the fringe of the bright red of her silk underwear. Close on it comes a narrow neck-piece with fastidious patterns of flowers or similar ornamental handwork in thread. If the rigour of winter is on, another robe intervenes before your eyes trail back to the top layer.

This brief sketch may read as a deliberate disparagement of well-dressed males. Then in point of fact I cannot get away from the conviction that except for the stage and the circle of professional

story-tellers (hanashika) the kimono as men's wear has almost died out. A man in kimono and bowler hat is an absurd sight. None regrets that he has become a thing of the past. The only opinion I can advance by way of accounting for the strange misconglomeration is that years back, when the Japanese people had been swept off their feet by the sudden inflow of Western civilization, they found themselves so preoccupied with matters of a more serious nature that they jammed bowler hats on their heads in great haste, forgetting to change into "yofuku" to match. It also stands to reason that their offspring continued to mutter to themselves in the comic array that whatever their ancestors had handed down to them should be respected, no matter whether they liked it or not!

### III. The "Happy"-Coated Tokyoite

It was New Year's Eve. The hilarious nature of the observance of the occasion in America was explained to me by Mr. Curtis at some length before he wound up his speech with an invitation to "make a night of it" with the rest of his roomers. Jones, his wife, and Miss Woodward, too, were going, he said. Now Jones, in my eye, bore a striking resemblance to a movie comedian in a way. His eyes seemed to be so eternally incapable of blinking in embarrassment, winking at girls, or indicating happiness. So even Jones had made up his mind to be gay that night. "You Japanese are much too polite, kind of aloof, always out of sorts," remonstrated the paterfamilias, "We Americans don't like it. Come along." I nodded my willingness to join up. Thereupon Mr. Curtis thrust on me a bottle of whisky which I was told to keep in my hip-pocket and, above all, keep it off the searching eyes of the prohibition officers at the entrance of our destination in the village.





A "Happy"-clad gardener

It was too late to curse my temporary departure from the alleged aloofness peculiar to my race.

Well, the officers took no notice of the bulging goods on me as I went past them into a whirling mass of humanity, mostly in costume. Later I pointed out to Mr. Curtis that a poker-face, another of his pet theories about the Japanese, was a good thing to have at times.

"Why not?" said a voice above my head. It was Miss Woodward. She hoisted me off the seat and into a trot which, for all she did for my safety, sent me bumping against a number of fellow-revellers. The most serious of the collisions occurred when I stepped on a very sensitive foot. It gave rise to stifled protests from a rather handsome young man in agony. He saw who the "devil" was and instantly his sour face broke into a smile and hearty hand-shakes followed. "Now, look," his voice was most friendly as he called my attention to the foot I had outraged. Lo and behold, he wore a pair of dark-blue "tabi," not shoes. Eyeing him upward from his strange footwear in New York, though all very familiar to me, his tight-fitting trousers of the same material and colour, his Japanese vest to match, I could not but approve the finesse with which his "happy coat" hung from his broad shoulders. Evidently

he had been in Tokyo long enough to take fancy to Edokkonisms of which this simple but jaunty outfit is one.

It is doubtful if an Edokko thus attired and thus tripped over could be as tolerant as the American waltzer. Most probably, a Hundred-Percent Tokyoite would either call you "Baka yaro" or "Berammei." Now, the former of his ready expletives means "fool" while the latter, for all I know, has no literal meaning but is full of vitriolic ill-will. Such exclamations as "Jodan yuna" (No joking) "Katteni shi agare" (Have it your own way) or "Nanio" (What's that?) also occur frequently in his diction whenever and wherever a stormy mood overtakes him. In a sense, a "happy coat" may serve as a danger signal for one who is liable to give offence to the wearer. The dark-blue coat with a large house-mark or badge on the back is still much in evidence in those parts of Tokyo where the smart set of the city's workers are found. The name of a fish-dealer embellishes those worn by the distributors of fresh arrivals from a fish mart. A Chinese character or a cunning combination of them seems to stand out in white on the dark ground of the garment. A touch of femininity in a flower design on another would betray the man's calling as usher at a classy tea-

house or restaurant. Still another takes double precaution against misunderstandings by putting on the lapels of the everyday-wear "The House of Mitsui" in sober, contented characters in addition to the badge of the noted plutocrat on the back of the coat.

A brand-new "happy coat" can be had for nothing if you approach the right persons. Brewers, for example, are always eager to give them away free. All you have to do is to give them your word in return that you will wear their gifts in public. So ubiquitous are the coats advertising the name of one or another of the finest saké throughout the endless, thirsty streets of Tokyo.

Every New Year's Day calls forth from their mysterious hide-outs tea-house ushers, distributors of fish, brewers' boys, humble retainers of millionaires, carpenters, tree-trimmers and all in the newest of "happy coats"—and in the best of humour. It seems ridiculous to dissociate this uniform of the work-a-day Edokko from their favourite cuss-words. But they know it won't do to use them on the day of days. Our language is often thought by foreigners to be more polite than hefty and altogether incapable of yielding vigorous vituperations. This common error can best be corrected by overhearing the "happy"-coated people

talk to one another when it is not a New Year's Day. Not only are their words as hot as sake just poured from a steaming bottle but they have in addition a delightful crispness of the flavour. They let loose "Baka yaro!" "Berammei!" and other expletives in a quick, clear-cut enunciation known only to the tribe of Edokko who take pride in their "happy" coats dyed dark-blue and marked with crests.

#### IV. *Komuso*

EACH month has charms of its own. March daintily scents the countryside with the perfume of plum blossoms, April is crowned queen of the year with a rich garland of cherry flowers. Somehow the writer likes June best. Every year he greets its coming with the same eagerness with which he, as a boy, shouted "Banzai" at the soldiers returning from Manchuria at the end of the Russo-Japanese war. He recalls an undisturbed succession of languishing June days, each ending in a dusk the tranquil composure of which was made more restful by the soft music of a strolling flute player, the *komuso*.

But how quickly most of the serious events one witnesses—wars, fires, quakes and marriages in high places—become mere dim splotches in the receding perspective of life! A potted pomegranate plant which the writer was once told to nurse as tenderly as his little brother, has never gone the way of the vanishing memories of momentous spectacles. The appearance of the bright red flowers,

like so many tongues of flame, brought more warblers from the bush at the back of his home and *komuso* musicians from nowhere. "Son, there is a *komuso-san* at the door," came as a welcome permission to take a penny or two to the artist with his simple bamboo flute. The way the minstrel clicked open his white fan to accept the copper and then let it slide off into an embroidered black satchel, the way he walked off with leisurely, measured steps, had nothing of the cringing helplessness common to other members of the mendicancy.

One doesn't see much of the gentleman-beggar and his flute these days. Particularly does he seem to exclude large cities like Tokyo from the ken of his wanderings. Wherever he goes, however, he presents a spectacle glaringly out of step with modern progress. Of his face one sees only a part of his chin, an absurdly tall basket-like covering woven of rushes swathing his head down to the neck. Time was when it served as a mask to conceal the identity of secret agents who spied, through peep-holes in the front, on the political activities of the feudal lords. Believe it or not, the *komuso* in those days enjoyed many privileges denied to the samurai. He could slip freely past the border guards of any province wearing his

clumsy but concealing hat. Nor was he asked for an official passport when going from one feudal domain to another. In a word he was accorded the immunities of a diplomat in addition to the untrammelled freedom of a vagabond knocking about various places at will. That these advantages of the *komuso* should have attracted persons bent on ferreting out the killers of their fathers from their hiding places was only natural. So much for the hat, whose shape can summarily be described as resembling that of a teacup, bottom up and with the handle bumped off.

The man who wears the hat dresses simply. He is in black cotton kimono not dissimilar to the garb of a common Buddhist priest. The "so" in *komuso* means priest. Both in origin and practice, he stood half-way between a preacher of the Wisdom of Eternal Calm and a samurai ready to kill or be killed. A number of temples were built for the *komuso*, and they served different purposes. To some they were a haven of idleness, to others they served as political asylums since no police were permitted to enter the sacred precincts.

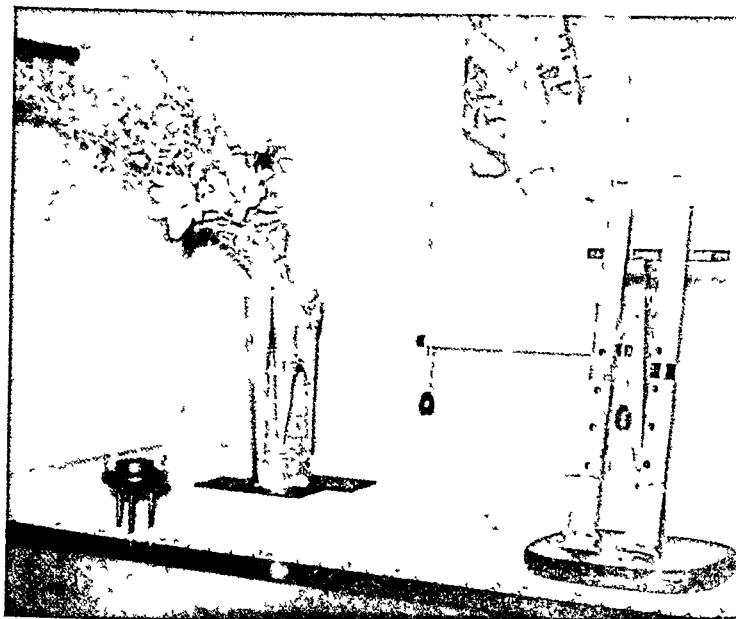
Such macabre associations, however, are easily forgotten, or else never come to mind, when one listens to the light, almost lullaby-like strains of the *komuso*'s five-holed flute. Every *komuso* is a



master. He blows into his absurdly simple instrument as one does into a flageolet, and you just marvel at the seemingly endless range of tune the piece of bamboo can produce. By slightly tilting his head on one side and then on the other, the player extracts delicate semi-tones unknown to Western music. And watch his fingers! They do not pound out crashing chords or dash across a whole keyboard with the unleashed fire of a race-horse. Our musician calls for closer scrutiny to be appreciated, and so does his music. The position of his fingers on the five stops of the flute is shifted almost imperceptibly to throw in marked varieties of melody and plenty of feeling.

The writer once boasted a competent appreciation of Al Jolson, the famous American jazz-singer. Even now, he cannot help claiming that the American is at his best when his voice vibrates with a mellowness made sweeter by a touch of pathos—pathos, mind you, not abject sadness. In the main, the writer holds, the music of the flute has all the great qualities of Al Jolson. It warbles like a warbler. It disdains the shrill notes of the canary as unworthy of the sacred bamboo of which it is made.

Homesick students are wont to take out their fifty-sen flutes and, leaning back against the wall



The five-holed bamboo flute

of their ill-lighted second-floor rooms, seek consolation by playing "Thinking of Home." Their efforts seem more calculated to wring their necks off their shoulders than tears from the eyes of their hearers. The very simplicity of the instrument no doubt taxes the player heavily. "It is only after three years of agonizing one's neck that anything like music comes out of a bamboo flute," they say.

Also prepared to risk their necks are farmers, fishermen and small shopkeepers who vie one with another in mastering the difficult art. Persons of an artistic turn of mind never tire of telling you how flute music, no matter how bad, when borne by a gentle wind over a wheatfield in June or a beach screened by drying fish-nets, adds magic to the beauty of nature. It makes the stars above stop twinkling in a pensive mood, they assure you.

Quite recently, the soothing charm of the music has caught the fancy of none other than the Mayor of Tokyo. He has seen in it a new value unthought of by anyone else. The capital had felt the pinch of strikes by street-car employees much too often, he reflected. One day an inspiration came to him. "Nothing better than the flute," he is reported to have muttered to himself, "to lull the restive boys back to reason." The upshot was that a new system was inaugurated under which

of the past. Most young men and women, at least, think of nothing else than landing a salary, however small to begin with, first thing upon finishing college. Thousands apply for vacancies, year after year, in such eminent houses of commerce or banks as Mitsui's, Mitsubishi's or Yasuda's, but a few are chosen. Some turn to foreign firms for shelter. There they learn, sooner or later, that they "do not belong." The employees are so constantly on the go that a sense of insecurity weighs threateningly on an inexperienced mind.

Well, the writer's friend has done rather well so far. He is neither a success nor a failure. Besides, there are his pretty wife and adorable children to reckon with in any all-round appraisal of his life. The former is assuredly a valuable asset and ally, a graduate of a well-known women's college. She, in frequent conferences with her husband, has sought to run her home not far askew from the following estimates :

#### FAMILY BUDGET

Rent ... ..	¥ 30.00
Food ... ..	50.00
Clothes ... ..	7.50
Amusement and socials (more accurately, wife's pocket money) ...	10.00
At disposal of head of family ...	¥ 30.00

Levies	...	...	...	...	...	3.00
Education, books, magazines, etc.						7.50
Medicine	...	...	...	...	...	3.50
Insurance	...	...	...	...	...	8.50
Total	...	...	...	...	...	¥ 150.00

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Salaried Man, as the table above indicates, is spared of the eternal seed of discord, namely a maidservant. Not that the wife has no need of help. Cooking, dishwashing, and the general upkeep of a Japanese home seem to make a slave of the wife. It would be only just if she protested against the absence of such labour-saving appliances as a vacuum cleaner, a washing and wringing machine, and central heating. She is already beginning to lose her patience. Yes, she often thinks of engaging a good maid. And yet a good maid in Tokyo is as difficult to get as a washing machine in a household of modest means. Keeping a maid, it must be noted, does not cost much: ¥7 a month will bring an efficient girl. Only if she didn't hear, talk and eat so much! Fortunately, the wife of our choice is also dissociated from a bumptious father-in-law or an ever-observant mother-in-law.

She affects foreign dress like most women of her age and up-bringing nowadays. The trouble is, she loves nice silk kimono as well. Now "the

cute kimono and its accessories," as tourists call them, are not as cheap as the foreigner imagines. And they are as sensitive to changing seasons as a bird-of-passage. These considerations have often caused Mrs. Salaried Man to pause over the dress allowance in the budget until her grief is dispelled by the yearly promise and arrival of her husband's bonus. The estimates of expenses in a family budget, unlike those of government expenditure, must needs be cut according to the size of one's income. The particular budget under consideration, drawn up as tight as a drum, hardly leaves margin enough to fall back upon to meet these bills. So everything, including the wife's dreams in regard to kimono and foreign dress, depends on the good-sized envelope that brightens the home around Yuletide.

Now for the head of the family. He is disposed of lightly in this sketch not because of any disrespect for him but chiefly due to the fact that his ways and days are not so different from those of the average man of his type in any part of the world. He begins each day, for instance, with a radio exercise, swallows his breakfast down at a gulp and makes for his place of work at eight sharp.

He is fond of his wife and perhaps more so of his little daughters who, being innocent of the



Salaried-men going to work

non-elastic nature of the family budget, pester him with their request for a "real baby." They had made a dummy with a Japanese cushion and carried it about on their backs by turns with all the tenderness and contentment of real mothers carrying real babies. One day they asked their father to get them a doll about the size of a real baby at a bargain sale. Unable to say no, he went to the store in the morning before work. He had no idea how eagerly people like himself respond to such announcements as "50% off regular prices" until he got caught up in a terrific jam of people from which he found it impossible to extricate himself. It was the first time he was late to the office since he got the job ten years ago. Bearing the fact in mind, the boss set aside the I-won't-stand-this-any-more sort of scowl which he would meticulously mete out to the habitually tardy and greeted the clerk with some unusually flippant remarks instead.

Another twenty years at the grind may or may not find Mr. Salaried Man in a private executive's office. He lacks "pull" from above. He knows he has no other stepping-stone to a seat of influence and wealth than his will to work, his punctuality and his abstention from heavy drinking. At the time of his retirement, which he



secretly fixes for his fifty-fifth year, the firm will most probably take note of his past services in terms of a gold wine-cup (kimpai) and a check for Y 10,000 or more.

And is it, after all, such a discomfort to be just a nobody? After centuries of reckless bloodshed that well-nigh brought the destruction of civilization, the world has come to pay belated homage to the Unknown Soldier. The Unknown Clerk, too, should have a place of honour in the world of tomorrow. The writer would like, before he passes on, to have an opportunity to join other worshippers at a monument, preferably in Marunouchi, which would be draped with flags and wreaths and dedicated to the memory of Just Nobody.

## VI. *Women in the New World of Usefulness*

"I WISH I could don a skirt without annoying people and cops," declared a young man out of work. He looked at the ready-made pants which he might have slept on to smooth out the bulges at the knees. An expression of contempt in his downcast eyes gave a clear enough clue to the motif of his extraordinary pronouncement. He was an M. A., alert and willing to work. But jobs these days have a predilection for girls.

In Tokyo and other large cities the door of employment stays locked and barred to men but is always kept wide open for girls. Department stores, insurance companies, banks, hospitals, candyshops are of course full of them. Even those government offices which not long ago had been regarded as wigwams for men of the he-man stamp have since mended their ways by quietly dropping the taboo.

Naturally, the arrival of girls on the scene of business means exeunt so many male workers. The

alarm becomes more impressive in face of the fact that jobs which no women would take up in the West are not unwelcome to their sisters out here. Elevators are operated by young girls who, from the nature of things, are better able to smooth out irritations, either mechanical or temperamental. Recently, waiters on the dining-cars have been replaced by smiling, noiselessly efficient, aproned damsels in their teens. The change, too, has won approval of the travelling public. "Marunouchi next stop!" when announced by a girl, has somehow none of that tone of peremptory surliness which seems inevitable in the same announcement by a male bus conductor. Out goes the male bus conductor and his place is taken by the owner of a more soothing voice. Thus, day by day, men are feeling a palpable and painful shrinkage in opportunities for work.

"A girl need never seek an independence," we used to tell our daughters some twenty years ago. Home was to be their chief concern. Parents shook their heads at their young ladies still unmarried at twenty. A college for girls was an anathema with the elders in whose opinion it could serve no other purpose than paving the way to spinsterhood. But a girl would be a girl regardless of the paternal restraints: higher education

has gained popularity among a good number of girls doubly blessed with a keen mind and ample means. Though stopping short of the destination they had been warned of, a college course makes it impossible for them to "settle down" before they get to the dividing line of the twenties. And in determining the marriageable age of a Japanese girl, cause and effect not only react to each other within a normal cycle but get mixed up in a mad whirl of an abnormal cycle. Her prospective spouse, partly due to the increasing replacement of men by women in various callings, will be no longer young when he feels confident of supporting a wife and their offspring.

Reasons against early marriage are many. As many factors may be ascribed to the increasing number of women with jobs. Most of our "office girls" come from the salaried class. It seems perfectly reasonable that the daughters of well-educated middle class families become intellectuals as they grow up and find their fathers apologetic for their inability to provide their girls with savings large enough to buy a trousseau. If there is one daughter to a family the problem, put roughly in terms of cash may amount to some 500 yen up, and should present no serious obstacle to marriage. In most cases, a "dad" having more than one in-

## VII. *The Over-worked Student*

AMBASSADOR Troianovsky once observed with that charming smile of his that he, speaking in his capacity as envoy of the Soviet Government which he represented here two years ago, didn't quite like to see the cherry blossoms. He explained this unusual phenomenon by saying that they seemed to bring with their pageantry a revival of the chronic dispute over Japanese fishery rights in Siberian coastal waters almost every year.

More worried at the approach of cherry blossom time, however, are parents who have children in school. For in the month of March each year the hearts of thousands of mothers are chilled by the thought of the pathetic ordeal to which their children are about to be submitted, namely school entrance exams. The pale little faces look paler and prematurely old in contrast with the pink freshness of our national flower. The strain on boys between eleven and twelve years of age is known to be most exacting. The writer has a boy preparing for the test. For one thing, the poor

lad eats like a bird or a plutocrat with a surfeited appetite for food. A lover of nature as he is, the writer is inclined to feel that he has every reason to share with the Soviet ambassador an incidental distaste for cherry blossoms.

It was natural under the disquieting circumstances that the writer should have developed a new zest for reading educational journals. In the March number of one of them, he came across an article dealing with the problem in point. It begins with a challenge to the mental equilibrium of the teachers at a certain Tokyo middle school who put the following questions before eleven-year old boys to test their qualifications for admission :

1. Give a summary of the provisions of the Treaty of Portsmouth.

2. Point out the outstanding differences between the Japanese Constitution and the organic laws of the Western nations.

3. Tell the approximate distance at which the celebrated archer, Nasuno Yoichi, demonstrated his skill at Yashima. Also give the basis of your conjecture.

As for the first question, all the writer can say, quite unabashed, is that he fails to remember off-hand the provisions of the Treaty of Portsmouth and that still, twenty years ago, he went

through the Law School of Waseda University without much of a scrape. About the same thing may be said regarding the second question. But by far the most maddening is the last. "The celebrated archer, Nasuno Yoichi," for all we know, may well have been a fictitious character to begin with. In 1185 the armed rivalry between the Genji and Heike clans was brought to an end with the defeat of the Heike fleet off Yashima. The engagement it seems, was marked by spells of inaction, and the archer's legendary stunt was meant and performed just as a side-show, according to folklore.

There is nothing odd about the reputed motif. The members of our House of Representatives often have recourse to a subterfuge of this kind during a dull session. But the story told of the archer has so much of the makings of fiction that one wonders if the chronicler of events in those days had not just gotten tired of recording the number of the dead and wounded and sought an escape from the dismal routine by adding this breezy touch of romance out of his own head. At any event, a "basis of conjecture" as to the distance covered by the archer did not occur to the historian.

Should the writer's son overcome enigmas of

such Sphinx-like density, none could be happier than he. However, he will not indulge here in idle speculation as to what sort of an intellectual giant the little scholar might grow into when he completes his university course if he succeeds in overcoming such mental hazards.

Nor do primroses line the path leading out of a middle school. Boys who want to get higher education are confronted by another fearsome Sphinx before they grope their way into a koto gakko (high school). The riddles put forward by the entrance examiners are so hard to solve that only one out of every ten applicants, on the average, has the right answers. Year by year, the serious-minded public wonders with bitterness if the people in the Department of Education have ever thought of the terrible effect the nerve-racking ordeal has on the health of boys at a stage in life when their physical well-being calls for the best of care. Do the officials imagine that they have the right to bend and dwarf the bodies and souls of Nippon's sons the same way they would treat potted pines?

Some or most of the critics of the present educational system no doubt have sons who have failed to make the grade, but such an ulterior motive does not alter the robust righteousness of



their complaints. Mention is also made by them of the fact that not a few of the lads thus let down after months of cramming begin to evince an interest in radicalism, not knowing anything better to do during the long period of forced idleness. By way of clinching their arguments, the critics do not forget to cite newspaper accounts of suicides among the stranded youth. As long as education is left to pursue its crooked course, they perorate, our country is bound to go on having corrupt politicians, radicals and nationalist cranks who take the law into their own hands. The writer, despite or because of his ulterior motive, is completely at one with the critics.

Then follows an anticlimax. Last year 124 universities and colleges turned out some 33,690 graduates, girls included, of which less than 45 per cent. have found employment since. There is no means of checking up what avenue of usefulness is being left open to the idle half of this expensive mass production. Matriculation in Japan, to quote an epigram current about town, gives birth to triplets, namely tuberculosis, "dangerous thoughts," and unemployment.

In the opinion of Mr. Nyozeikan Hasegawa, most of our university students seem to come from families of middle or lower middle-class people in

the country. Most parents naturally learn, sooner or later, that it is no easy thing to see their sons through school. By the time the young men have graduated and begin to gaze longingly at ready-made foreign clothes shown so attractively in the windows of the department stores, their fathers far away from Tokyo have nothing left to fall back on as a means of subsistence. As elsewhere in the world, college education has long ceased to be a wise investment. The pity is, says the eminent publicist, that the country folk do not realize the fact. In their eardrums still lingers the melody of a popular song of the Meiji years: "Put your boy in the Imperial University and your worries are over! Either he will rise to membership in the Cabinet or at least become a Ph. D."

### VIII. Tokyo's Centre of Big Business

"DON'T you know, man, that every inch of our space is or should be as valuable as that in Marunouchi?!"—I must have been in a fit of madness when I thus admonished one of those peddlers who continually pester editors with "copy." The comparison was absurd even if the circumstances and my natural journalistic pride brought the two disconnected values somewhat closer together. Now, as everybody knows, a "tsubo" of land around Tokyo Station is worth more than ¥2,000. The Mitsubishi people, who own the entire lots, would not now part with an inch of space even for that consideration. For one thing, my chance overstatement seems to have sunk deeper in the mind of the visitor than my broadside abuses. He has never come back since.

The brief history of the Big Business areas of Tokyo has no parallel elsewhere. Within the span of half a century the value of the land has risen from next to nothing to the dizzy height of today. A worthless stretch of waste land, that is

what it was until some thirty years ago when willows still whitened and aspens quivered from one end of it to another. Ordinarily the annals of real estate business record "ups" and "downs;" those of Marunouchi, however, register none of the latter but a succession of all-time highs.

Rents have mounted without respite. For the lease of a tobacco store, the size of a kiosk, the bald, silent man is paying ¥100 a month. It is somewhat beyond simple mathematics to see how he manages to meet the exorbitant rent by selling "Golden Bat" and "Cherry" cigarettes at 7 and 10 sen a package respectively. During the winter months, the tobacconist huddles over a fire-box—almost embracing it—to keep himself warm, so that only the top of his shiny dome can be seen above the counter. Little does he suspect that the sight discourages many of his young customers who decidedly prefer to buy their tobacco when his comely daughter is around. The dancing light shed by a silver-embossed hair ornament worn amidships of the elaborate coiffure of the girl goes farther than her father can imagine to whet the male appetite for more cigarettes. And why not? Are the boy-clerks from the neighbouring office buildings to be blamed if they spy on the kind of head behind the counter from the opposite street

corner before they make for the shop to get cigars for their bosses?

There is nothing extraordinary about the uniformly squatting buildings around this district, although almost every rikisha-puller or taxi-driver will slow down to try and impress you with what he believes to be an imposing sight. The Western idea of making places of work look like palaces and dwellings just like our places of work has not yet caught our fancy.

Marunouchi has, I think, a striking aspect notwithstanding. Probably no business centre of a foreign town is subjected to such an intensive exaction of utility from every bit of space as ours. Narrow steps lead down to nooks and corners in the basement of every building to disclose lunch counters and "eel-and-rice" stands. So narrow are some of the passages that a stout patron will have to force his way through by walking sideways. In the usual trappings of a "ryoriya," each one-tenth of its normal size, one is reminded of an attempt to delude us by an optical illusion. One looks at these little places through their disguises as through a magnifying glass and arrives at the same result. Not a bad idea where every inch of space is gold!

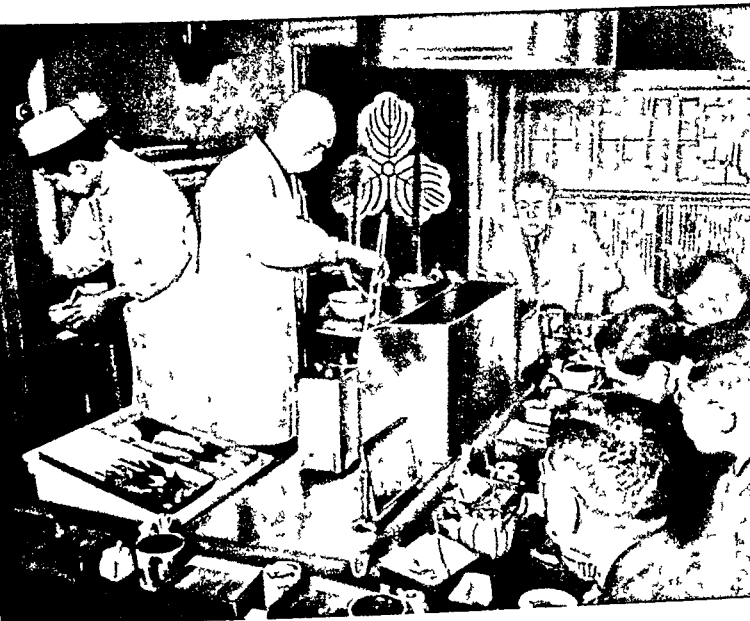
An information office in the neighbourhood

is no bigger than the slab of ice your ice-man drops every morning on the doorstep back home. It is an independent building and a one-man show for obvious reasons. The spectacle always recalls to my mind my astonishment at the American idea of fitting shoes. I was told by a man at Feigenbaum's, one of the expensive shops off Park Row in my day, that I should fit my feet into the footwear. "Why, in my country," retorted I, "shoes are made to fit our feet." He appeared insulted. I limped back all the way I had come in a pair of corn-breeders. I don't know if the excessively undersized structure in question has ever taken in a clerk who had the nerve to depart from the preposterous idea of fitting his body into the hole within. Anyway a man of the average size, as the average size goes here, will find it rather trying to stretch out his limbs and yawn before he closes up the place for the day at seven p.m.

## IX. *The Colourful Urbanity of the Ginza*

It is recorded in history that the Ginza, heart of Tokyo, attracted nothing but sea-weed and other drifts of the briny deep until the year 1603. The famed street owes its origin to the creative genius of Iyeyasu, founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, whose first act upon coming into power was to reclaim the armpit of Tokyo Bay on which the Ginza now stands. "But who cares what *our* Ginza looked like so long ago," a young promenader on Iyeyasu's street today might protest with a shrug of his shoulders carefully imitated from his favourite movie actor. The Ginza's history, therefore, shall be dealt with briefly, for I certainly bear no malice toward the young protestant and his fellow participants in the nightly parade that marches down the avenue sometimes as many as 20,000 strong.

In 1872 there was a big fire which reduced the busy mart to as pitiful a spectacle as we saw with horror in 1923, the year of the disastrous earthquake-fire. Bearing in mind the increasing



A "tempura" shop in one of the Ginza back-streets



importance of the ruined district on the eve of the completion of the Tokyo-Yokohama railway, first of the kind to be built in Japan, the Government set about erecting a fire-proof, foreign-style Ginza at a cost of ¥ 1,800,000 soon after the fire. Colour prints of the revamped street, boasting of sidewalks paved with dark-brown bricks and a clock-tower, will revive in one's memory how some of the conservative college towns in America used to look in the Nineties. That the Ginza of those days came to answer to the strange name of "Brick Street" shows the immense pride people took in those rich-coloured sidewalks. I know and patronize a certain restaurant located up a narrow alley not far from Owari-cho. With courageous unconcern it holds the old memory so dear in a sizzling, steaming corner of its heart that it calls itself "The Brick Restaurant"—of all the names a restaurant-owner might take a fancy to. I guarantee, however, that the food there is quite toothsome regardless of the rather indigestible name.

Sign-boards and shop-windows have always been meant to catch, if not to irritate, the eyes of passers-by. To mention some examples of nomenclature of the eye-grabbing type, there are three good "tempura" restaurants called respectively "Bearded-tem," "Stammering-tem," and "Bald-

head-tem." As a matter of fact, one needn't look at the sign-boards. At the first mentioned place, one sees a portly, bearded cook busily distributing his noted fried shrimps to a dozen of diners. A lean fellow with twinkling eyes stammers out light pleasantries to humour along his customers at the second "tem." A head as bright as a mirror will bow you out from the third. "Tem," an abridged form of "tempura," is only used in hyphenates. After you have dined at these places on the Ginza, you will find their odd names the easiest thing in the world to remember.

A well-established jeweller, a rival of Hattori on the corner of Owari-cho, once went too far in the competition of window-dressing stunts. He put in one of his windows a real gold brick worth ¥ 25,000. "Nothing like gold," he assured himself, elated over the bright hit, "now that the yellow metal has become as rare as genuine Hiroshige prints." It did the trick, sure enough. It not only served its purpose of publicity, but also impressed the public at large with the solid financial standing of the firm. One crisp morning a burglar smashed the window-pane, seized the precious brick and made a safe get-away. The store was closed up directly.

All department stores on the Ginza as else-

where respond to the breath of March and April in their own way. The winter months, by the way, are a busy season for both Cupid and those parents about to marry off their daughters. Every shop-window bursts forth with displays of marital kimono. An alarmingly life-like figure of a bride is on exhibition at one of the expensive stores. One is impressed by the amazing interpretations of Art in the designs of the silk robes. Not less impressive is the list of prices prominently displayed at the foot of the lady. One kimono and an "obi" to match are priced at ¥ 500. There are, then, a hundred and one other little things which a Japanese bride must needs have to complete her costume. Their total cost piles up to something like that of a motor-car. No wonder that some parents shudder at the recollection or the anticipation.

Sons cost less in Japan. They can be ushered into their weddings in ready-made suits without blushing. This fact is borne in mind by the department stores which contemptuously relegate men's wear, hats, suits, shoes, etc. to the most insignificant corners of their shop-windows.

Wit sparkles in not a few shop announcements along the Ginza. "Jishin kaminari kaji dorobo de mo heiki na kinko," says a placard at

a safe dealer's shop. The epigram is a parody on an old saying which sums up with one breath our three worst national calamities, namely earthquake, thunder and fathers. In the sales slogan, robbers ("dorobo") are made to bring up the rear of the horrid trio in place of "fathers." It is highly provocative of mirth in the Japanese language, though it fails to explode in such a translation as, "Our safes can face earthquakes, thunder and robbers with equanimity."

"Our beer goes to Germany," scrawled in a bold, challenging hand across the front window of a beer hall is, I think, more telling and has as strong a kick in it as the vaunted beverage itself. It seems all the more ingenious because of the absence of any explanation whether the beer is sold to Germans on the strength of its light cost or by virtue of its quality.

This cocktail of our hectic urban life, which we call the Ginza, is said to have made Bernard Shaw wonder if it was "one of your slums." "But who cares what a casual visitor thought of our proud Ginza?" say I, joining in the tide of promenaders that rolls along at the breathless pace of 20,000 an hour.

## X. *Out in the Country*

IN one of his weekly strolls out in the country, the writer had an informative half-hour talk with a chatty old woman who runs a "tea-and-rest house" overlooking a rolling expanse of land and sea near Odawara. By the time the second cup of tea was set before him he had learned all there was to learn about the neighbourhood. "That white foreign-style house roofed with green slate," she went on, pointing out the objects of interest one by one, with her stubby finger, "is a summer home of Prince Konoye and that one almost on the edge of the cliff was recently built for a wealthy Kabuki actor. On the farthest end of the village is a lovely home of one of the mistresses of Mr. —, you know, a big Tokyo banker. But you can't see it from here on a day like this."

It was late in November and a frosty mist came rolling in from the sea. The wrinkled, leathery face of the woman contracted and dilated as she tipped off to a stranger these and other intimate information.

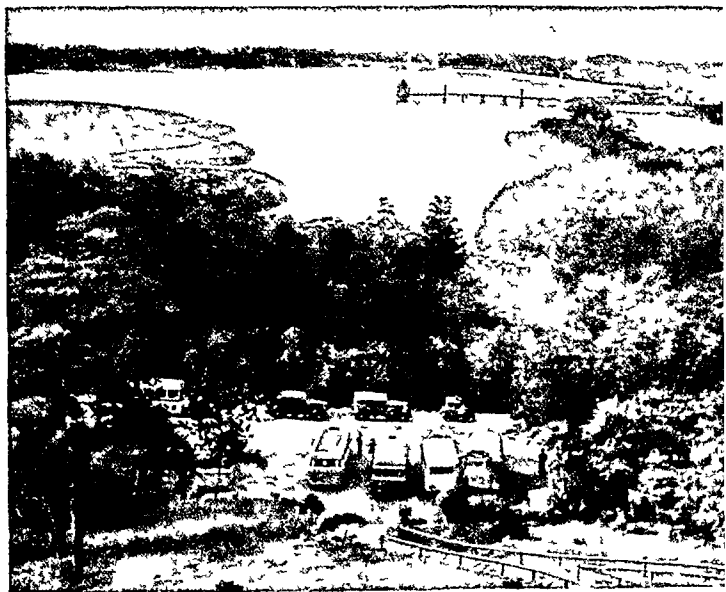
It was quite possible, thought the writer, that Mr.—'s lawful wife, a leader in a wide field of uplift activities, might park her car before the shop for tea one bright Sunday and that her eyes might follow the stubby finger to see all. The sun was still high but it marked just a blur of yellow in the gathering mist which, together with his premonition of a show-down with a bang or a rankling compromise caused the writer to discontinue on his way. An hour's ride on a bus brought him back to Odawara. All the way his thought, naturally, turned to our round and wholesale castigation of divorces, right or wrong. He reasoned with himself why hundreds of thousands of homes in Japan should not be made happier by easing up the ban somewhat to begin with.

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Well within easy distances from Tokyo are found green belts of tea farms. A foreigner who has lived here long enough to like the clean, unassuming flavour of bancha, tea for common use, will be astonished at the sight of hikers drinking coffee at a tea-stand in one of those centres of tea trade. The writer is aware of an expression of pride in the face of every tea-stand keeper answering to an order for a cup of "your famous tea."



Within easy reach of Tokyo

And they know how to make it a sight better than most masters of the tea-ceremony. The light green drink seems to possess a memory in each cupful which would leave behind it a caressing relish in your mouth.

The sight of the writer's acquaintance rounding his back as he sets about the task has none of haste or earthly greed. He has two grown-up sons who work for a tea-merchant. On his first visit at the shop, the writer sought to leave on the bench 10 sen for a tip. The gentle soul, evidently embarrassed, took out a piece of paper, put some cakes on it, and proffered the package with a profound apology. It left the writer to chuckle inwardly by recalling a fracas between a friend of his and a cafe waitress he had witnessed not long ago. The former had returned to Tokyo after a long stay in America with a queer notion, among many others equally askew of our ways of life, that a 10 per cent. tip was a proven panacea to money-grabbers the world over. He felt his mistake in his cheek smarting from a well-aimed dime at the cafe. The "innocent" in his fatherland offered his tithe to a myth whose ways are known to be more intractable than those of American bell-hops.



The fact that no countryside is innocent of buses should hearten a hiker who begins to distrust his will to walk. At regular intervals of within an hour, they climb steep mountain trails and unpaved lanes for passengers. That a poor lad with a swollen cheek was once seen balancing himself between the backs of the seats instead of sitting down should testify to the wild behaviour of some of them. If girl-guards of the Musashi Bus-line look militant in khaki trousers and leather leggings they reckon well with the kind of roads they have to negotiate.

Youth in the country who are, mark you, no longer the peasants of old have done much to tame bad roads. The writer one day stood for a moment before a somewhat cryptic statement written on a milepost asking the casual passer-by to "remember the village by its roads." It could mean anything, or nothing, at all in Japanese. But he "remembered" when he pushed on and passed another village where the footpath seemed altogether unfit to be walked over by people in shoes. The contrast between the two left him in no doubt as to what the notice meant to say.

It means a great deal more. A new spirit of co-operation for public good has begun to stir our country-side, which had for centuries past lived

in a shell of stolid, helpless individualism. A number of farmers now wash radish, carrots and other yields from their gardens in a common sink built and operated by a co-operative. The vegetables are then piled up in stacks on the wooden trailers hitched on to bicycles. Troops of farmers running those little vehicles for miles to a central market have now become a common sight. Apparently, they have realized that co-operation not only fosters public well-being but means good business to individuals as well.

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At the end of each good day's jaunt, the writer betakes himself to Shoji's Bath which is virtually underneath the main entrance to Tokyo Station. Thirty sen is the tax, six times as much as the charge elsewhere. Then its bathing basin with a fountain playing at the centre is about as many times as big. Besides, one who feels so dreadfully run down after a long stretch out into the country has only a flight of steps to walk from the train to get there. One can rejuvenate one's tired limbs in the spacious pool without fear of getting splashed by an uncereemonious crowd: for the place is never crowded.

Supper after a bath seems the easiest thing

in the world. There is a restaurant next door to the bath-room. Across the square there are some twenty or more of them in the Maru-Bil alone.

## XI. *Spinning Droll Yarns for the Common People*

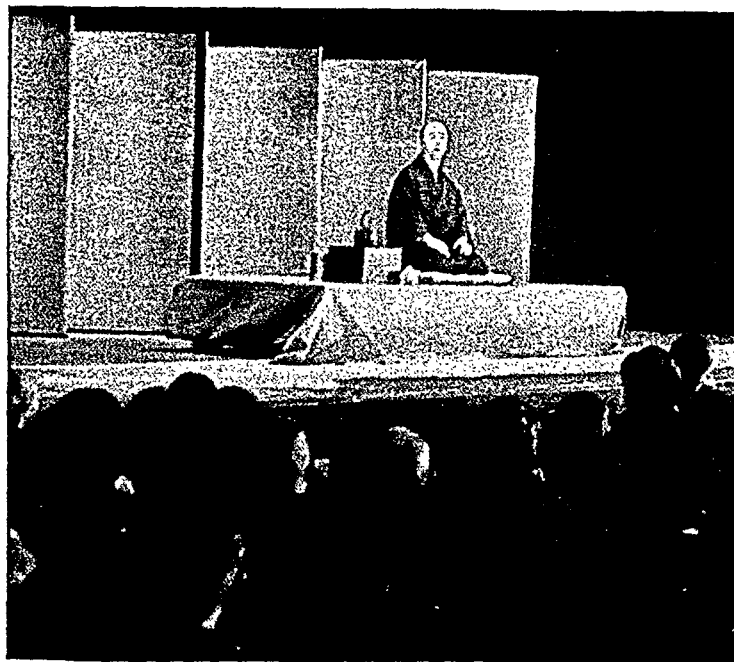
DURING his three years in New York as correspondent for the Asahi, the writer felt the hours after dark to be absurdly long and the stillness in his uptown apartment eloquent of the eager fumbblings for human society which seem to be almost inherent in exiles in a foreign city. It was thus inevitable that he soon found himself marching with the pulsating throng through the blazing show district on Broadway and finally became a regular habitu   of the Standing-room Only. It was also inevitable that his professional instinct should have kept his eyes busy on both sides of the footlights on those occasions. What struck him most was the admirable behaviour of the audience.

Among men seated in the centre third row he could count not a few persons, particularly men, who looked on the performance with the cold impassiveness of a Zen monk. They would not even raise their eyebrows at the most thrilling scenes. "It's simple. Those people you saw at the show

were probably thinking of so many dollars to be made on the morrow or of how to preserve those dollars from total extinction. Take it from me, we don't give a damn for amusement." The writer was amazed by this comment spat out by a member of the brooding tribe that the informant evidently was.

Out here in Tokyo, some of our people seem to find it difficult to set aside a worried, eternally preoccupied look outside of the theatre or any place of entertainment. The Japanese turned loose on the streets present an appearance far from being affable in any sense of the word. In the mass as well as in the individual there is something very woefully impersonal about us regardless of our politeness, discreetness, ready smiles and other saving graces. This sterilizing mask, in the opinion of the writer — whose counsel has not however been sought by scholars — is a dissimulation clapped on all of us by history. It has won us not a few black eyes: it has evoked abroad a good number of unsavoury epithets for us, including "tricky," "inscrutable," "yellow," etc.

The writer, notwithstanding, persists in holding that naiveté is the main current of the Japanese mind. At any event, the spectacle of the audience at our unassuming "yose" entertainments



The story-teller on the stage

will bear out the assertion in full. There, one will see the Japanese unmasked. And how different they look! Not one of them has that looking-nowhere sort of filmy expression. All are fully alive from the dancing light in their eyes to the finger-tips already smarting from hearty handclapping. They go on laughing and cheering—and crying at times—with the simplicity of children unadulterated by duplicity or love of cheat. The writer has often sought their company and has as often been at a loss to know if those simple souls could be the same people whose faces ordinarily have such a forbidding aspect. Take it from the writer, the common people who patronize the “yose” halls are an uncommonly human, lovable set of our race.

On to the stage comes Kingoro, Japan's best hand at spinning droll yarns. At the mere sight of him, of his rubicund, jolly face which at once reminds one of an apple, the audience is whipped up to a froth of elation. The writer, due to the indolence of his mind and pen, takes it for granted that the absence of music and stage effects in the yose hall is known to every reader of the present sketch.

“Ahem, you know how I appreciate your persistent attendance,” begins Kingoro bowing with

profound deference to the audience. As he does so, he spots out a little girl sitting on her mother's lap. "I am especially happy to have you here to-night," he adds and, with a sudden movement, jerks out his hand toward her in the Nazi salute. It, of course, draws a fit of laughter from the crowd except the child who feels unpleasantly conspicuous.

"The reason is, I rely more on the patronage of people like you who, I trust, will bring on all the members of their families when they are grown up," explains Kingoro. "In, say, sixty years, you will have grand-children. The thought of my riding on the crest of your combined appreciation makes me always partial to children." Here he lowers his head which is sparse of hair.

Then begins his story of a guard on a train. He is wonderful in his encounter with a lunatic recently released from an asylum. After a brief altercation, the latter proceeds to shake the official by the collar, and the audience find it hard to realize that the gripping hand of the assailant and that of the victim struggling to remove it both belong to the same impersonator with the round face.

The guard has his next encounter with a farmer. Looking at the traveller's ticket, he dis-



covers that he is on the wrong train and tells him so, adding that he already owes two yen fifty to the Imperial Railways Department. "All light, all right," says the peasant offering to settle his unexpected debt. "But, Mr. Conductor, I got off at Uyeno Railway Station and was swept into another train without a locomotive by a crowd of impatient people. At Yokohama the same rude fellows bumped me out of the train and, again, they simply carried me into where you see me now. If this train is going west to a place called Osaka, why couldn't you switch the locomotive from the head to the tail of the train and take me north now that the balance is paid?"

The third passenger is found snoring. Repeated "Moshi, moshi" shouted close to his ear finally bring consciousness to the sleeper who turns out to be a man of a terribly inquisitive turn of mind. He wants to know when the train will get to Ogaki, Kyoto, Osaka, Moji, Kumamoto, and Kagoshima in Kyushu. "And where are you going, sir," gasps the official, time-table in hand. "Did you say 'Ogaki'? Why, it's the next stop! What's the use of asking me the time of arrival at a station hundreds of miles further on?"

"Well," says the sleepy man, eyeing the irate official with an apologetic look, "I often forget in

my sleep to clear out where I ought to. I was often carried away to unheard-of places." A troubled look gives way to one of contentment as the conductor sees the figure of his drowsy client making for the turnstile of the right station.

Kingoro impersonates these queer birds of passage, one by one or all of them in a lump, in his whirling one-man show. The writer, being one of them, has an unshaken and unshakable faith in the essential godliness of the common people of his country. Whatever delights those good, healthy souls casts a charm on him. From the antics of the "yose" artists, particularly of Kingoro, he derives the best fun in life.

## XII. *The Pocket-warmer—The Winter's Delight*

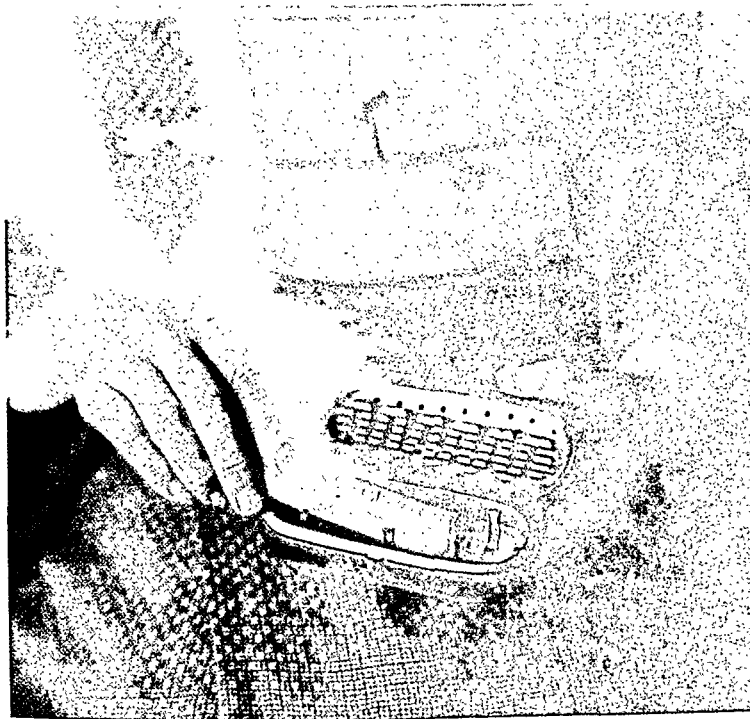
THE first few paragraphs of this sketch relate to the supernatural, a world so dark that many people think they can become bold therein and pull other people's legs with no fear of being caught. It is largely out of spite for this brazen but widely-practised indulgence that I have decided to drop the usual mask of "The Writer" in the narrative that follows, thus vouching for the truthfulness of every word of it in the openly first person.

I was almost a young man when by circumstance I passed a month in a haunted house then owned by my uncle. The old man was quite a genius at beating down the prices of things he wanted to get and I can well imagine he must have been just as great at making his customers tiptoe to reach up to his price-levels. Well, he bought at a ridiculously low price an estate which had been the country home of Count—. But not long after the uncanny discovery made by my mother, he was willing to reverse his business method for once: he resold the white elephant at a loss.

Though the name of the nobleman is kept in the dark just to humour along the spirits of my ancestors who had for generations looked up to his ancestors as both lords and paymasters rolled into one. But this much I can say: on almost everything from the tiles on the roof to the screens in each room of the house, one could see his coat of arms—the noted “Nine Stars.”

This much be-embossed purchase of my uncle's welcomed me with somewhat dusty but open arms. It was to be the vast study where I could pursue my school work in seclusion. Thin ice filmed the fish pond in the courtyard, and the first night after I arrived was unusually bright with a cold moon. On the white paper screen-windows were silhouetted bare trees and bamboo stalks and the shoulder of a knoll beyond. The artist in me felt a magic of beauty at the piece of Ukiyoye thus unfolded in the moonlight. Night after night the the silhouette stood still right before me, and each night made me shiver worse at the spectacle.

At the end of a month I hinted of my indefinable grievance to my mother. She said that she had been thinking of coming to see for herself how I was doing down there, and come she did. She stayed with me just three days, and on the third she came out with this sudden announce-



Preparing a pocket-warmer

ment: "Pack up your things, Ippei, and come right home with me. I can find you an equally quiet and less sepulchral place in our neighbourhood." There was a catch of terror in her voice.

Later she told me how, for two nights in succession, a man of past middle age and aristocratic bearing sat beside her pillow, saying nothing, apparently in the agony of his soul. He wore a dark "haori" bearing the same coat of arms, the Nine Stars, in white. His face was as pale as the moon above the knoll, and shadows of sadness played around his staring eyes. Either he had met a violent end or put innocent persons to death.

"Anyhow," mother insisted, "his spirit is denied a resting place because of some grave sins he committed during his life."

Very likely she couldn't sleep well in that big, bare room with no adequate heating in December. It must be admitted that in a hurry she forgot to bring her pocket-warmer, a portable calefactory so popular among old folk. Now that I am past middle age I am naturally skeptical of most things. If a blot of mustard or a crumb of cheese could raise an illusion of Marley's ghost, it should be reasonable enough to trace the Japanese nobleman's spirit back to the absence of a pocket-warmer. The only difference lies in the fact that my good

to the rigours of any winter for weeks.

In the mountainous north of Japan winter makes an early start in October and does not relax its grip until well into March. In those districts people huddle around open fireplaces or negotiate their meals on top of a kotatsu, an ancient heating device which has done more than the Department of Education and other admirers of the glorious past in keeping alive the visions of legendary Japan. Business in pocket-warmers and their appurtenances is said to be far from roaring in such areas. The heat which they supply obviously does not measure up to the requirements of the climate on the one hand and, on the other, to that call of human fellowship around a collective hearth which lives strongest among the sturdy northerners.

### XIII. Aging Gracefully

"ANOTHER five years at the grind and I'll be rolling in the orgies of retired life," chuckles a modestly successful Japanese at fifty-five. He is well prepared to accept the inevitable without even a hint of remorse. Once in this mood, he would next single out from the sundry practical advantages of his birthright that perfect ease with which every Japanese can age gracefully. Men and women denied of private means in advanced years are known to be as thoroughly at peace with their new world as the retired rich.

First, thought must be had of our traditional respect for old age which would not tolerate the most ungrateful of sons for banishing his forbears to grey desolation in the winter of life. As potent, then, in making life's post meridian as fresh as morning is the presence of a community of *inkyo* or *go-inkyo* in every conceivable neighbourhood. Its members are recruited from all walks of life. Some have villas in the country; most of the others share the same roofs with their progeny. But



what of it? In the Brotherhood of Old Age complete equality of man is stoutly upheld. A set of more thoroughgoing democrats have never breathed among us. They are the pals of pals. And if sporadic differences threaten their bond of good fellowship at times, a chessboard is generally the centre of such storms. Altercations may be summed up thus: "Wait a minute, old boy, I meant to put a piece right in the gambit you have just snatched away from me," to which protest the elated rival no doubt retorts, "You ought to have done so before I made the move."

The third step to ensure the comfort of our old folk has been taken by the laws of the Rising Sun Empire which has at all times been busy glorifying the setting sun of its sons and daughters. It is specifically provided in those laws that a man reaching sixty years of age may relinquish his responsibilities as head of the family. The statute in point turns to a woman with a softer heart: the age clause is waived outright in her favour. She can, accordingly, edge off toward a delectable exit from active life whenever she courts it.

Of the various pursuits of our retired people, perhaps the most picturesque is that of pious vagrancy called "junrei." If you ever spent a summer holiday in one of those ancient towns or



A *go-inkyo* out for a stroll

villages linked up with one another by an almost infinitely winding, lonely road beyond the reach of puffing trains, you may have met many of them. Dressed in quaint, weather-beaten kimono, with the brims of broad mushroom-like hats woven of sedge reaching down to their spare shoulders, they present a spectacle too striking to escape the eyes even of casual hikers.

Often man and wife set out on a pilgrimage to sacred temples in all parts, and their home address is recorded in black on the strange headgear of each for fear that they might become separated by an unforeseen mishap on the way. A kind of surplice thrown over the shoulders has the same identification tag. Unafraid of the stunning heat in August, the chilly breath of late autumn, and robbers all the year round, they trek the solitary beat. Their silent trust in the ultimate soundness of the ritual is indeed unbreakable.

There is a touch of pathos in the psalms to Buddha sung by them in unison as they plod on, ringing their small hand-bells which make their chorus sound more like a dirge than anything else. But it is not a dirge: it is an expression of a contented soul which looks into the future with abundant hope.

What is great about these jaunts—some ex-

tending over a year or longer—is the fact that in nine cases out of ten they wind up in complete cures of rheumatism and other common ailments among the pilgrims. What is better still, it may be added, the pair return home from their travel more tenderly attached to each other than ever before. When Abbot Kobo Daishi gave the pedestrian recipe to his followers in the ninth century, he might have said to himself: “The kind of travel I am now proposing will give plenty of animation to body and soul. I’ll see to it that it will. You bet, that’s what these old wasters need.”

Shady park benches in summer and countless chess-clubs in cooler seasons look after the comforts of another tribe of *inkyō*. They are mostly ex-keepers of small shops. As often as not they cast longing eyes on those who are well kept and better off enough to embark on a “*junrei*” itinerary. A man in this category shares with his heir the same old roof and, regardless of his unwillingness to stir up trouble by putting his nose into the way business is being run, difficulties between father and son have a way of cropping up at times. At the first sight of brewing discord, he betakes himself to his favourite retreat, a nearby park. He is not alone there, however. He makes it a point to take along with him one or two of his grand-

children. Keeping a sharp eye on the situation, his daughter-in-law has a ball of boiled rice, eggs and some fruit nicely wrapped up in paper ready for the exodus. A grey-haired, stooping figure hanging about the coolest spots in Hibiya Park or enjoying lunch with a brood of children is a familiar sight on a warm day.

It may be no news to be told that people who have to live from hand to mouth have no place to retire to. - But the fact that excessive wealth stands in the way of almost every leader of industry and finance in Japan may come to a fastidious editor as quite a bit of news. The present writer is on speaking terms with a good number of them. Once a patriarch in the printing business was asked if he would ever relinquish his control over his various printing firms. His reply was almost tragic. "Oh, not until they go under in a smash, I should imagine." And he is within easy reach of eighty. After a heavy day, and his every day is heavy, the printing magnate bustles into the chess-room of the Nippon Club and wears down even the best player to despair with his indomitable horse-power. Evidently, the very exuberance of his energy joins hands with his millions in pinning him down to the dizzy whirl of business at his age.

tary tickets for shows, came my way not long after Mr. Ikeda took me into his confidence. Bearing in mind that two free tickets for an expensive Kabuki play are known to come anybody's way as rarely as Heaven rains manna, I soon found myself in conference with my daughters.

"Why, Mother has not been to a show for years. I know she is a Kabuki enthusiast. So are you, aren't you, father? There you are." Thus spoke a member of the junior delegation with really touching earnestness. Her pious recommendation had a "whereas" clause in it though. She said that girls of her age could not simply bear to sit through classical plays where actors of note take ten minutes to roll their eyes. In a word, she added, Kabuki performances have none of the attractions of the modern revue-stage breath-taking action, whirling nudity, pep and dancing.

The second item on the list of modern charms, naturally, caused me some concern. I remembered how Dr. Johnson had cowed before the flaunting of silk stockings on the stage of his day and how he had denounced them as causative of "amorous propensity."

Anon I went to the show of my girls' choice. One visit was enough to assure me in more than one sense. Above all, it disarmed what fear I had

had about the effect of nudity on the young set. A bevy of scantily-dressed girls, it is true, trooped in and out almost continuously, singing, swinging and turning sommersaults with gusto. But that something which Dr. Johnson deplored was missing. The players, all girls mostly in their 'teens, were so dainty and diminutive that, no matter how wild their makeup or acting, they could not affect the "propensities" of a normal person. Be it a scene of the underworld or a heterogeneous turnout of lovers under an inevitable moon, the stage is felt to border on nothing but some happy land of elves in the tropics. The six-footers' challenge to thrills in similar shows on Broadway is evidently beyond the reach of our Shochiku girls who are seen to grasp at the straps on a tram with the deliberation of a toe-dancer. It is altogether a commendable place for girls.

More than 90 per cent. of the audiences at these revue shows are girls of about the same age as my daughters. With them the opinion of the minority, who go to the revue theatre only when they have to, apparently has no weight at all. The regular majority warms up to the show beyond a doubt. Yells greet their respective favourites as they come in sight; giggles are smothered behind long kimono sleeves by more discreet fans; and

flowers thrown at random by the actresses always spur their admirers into a rampage of competition for possession of the souvenirs.

Time was when the warmth of the ovation scared the police authorities into deciding that some drastic step should be taken to keep the glorified Miss Nippon from falling to pieces. Ever since a loudspeaker has continued to blaze out a warning to the audience that shouts will no longer be permitted by the authorities. Yet, girls will be girls. I am told that nowadays they just nudge their little sisters to do the shrieking for them, confident of the absence of police measures to bring to book persons under age. "Abominable," say the defeated officers, but "Why shouldn't the girls enjoy themselves?" asks the understanding minority, adding not without pride that their daughters have enough wits about them not to run wild at any body's suggestion.

Now comes a conclusion. Reader, you may have noticed our weakness for conclusions. A statement of facts ends up often in a far-fetched conclusion. So does a love letter in Japan. We heartily disapprove the perverse practice of American journalism which would have stories begin with a conclusion which they call the "lead" and prattle away to no purpose in the end.



Of all people, I am conclusively certain, our girls cut the most pathetic figure. With their hearts crying out for freedom, they find all around them high pressure being brought to bear in order to keep them down on the rack of old traditions. By temperament they are against the crumbling scheme of life lived or being lived by their forebears. In truth, it would be no overstatement to say that the Japanese girl has drunk more deeply in the gushing spring of radicalism than her brothers. She is so absurdly and insistently isolated from the companionship of boys. Parents, visiting relatives, brothers and her whole neighbourhood join hands in pinning her down to the cut-and-dried pattern of the rapidly-fading Miss Nippon with whom she has next to nothing in common. She wants to see herself in top hat and tails, twirling a cane, turning sommersaults and singing airy ditties to her heart's content. Such a wonderful escapade she can have vicariously at the Shochiku show. Voilá!

## PART II

## 1. *Kiyokata Kaburagi Portraying Feminine Beauty*

KIYOKATA KABURAGI, Japan's foremost painter of feminine beauty, was born in Tokyo in 1878. From his infancy he seems to have become strongly attached to the city and its life. The manifold and irresistible fascinations of his birthplace made a willing slave of the lad. The womanhood of the great metropolis in the romantic period of Meiji was to be the theme for the young artist who, now close on sixty and assured of lasting fame, is seen still hard at work on the old but ever-intriguing subject. He became popular at eighteen and found the steps leading up to a true appreciation of his genius as the ablest interpreter of our womanhood not at all forbidding.

It is not difficult to understand his sensitive and untiring affection for the feminine charms of this particular period. Anyone who passed his adolescence in the early days of Meiji might have observed women emerging from a dwarfed, arrested existence into a fuller life. They were no longer the prisoners of the ideal of subdued,

though adorable, elegance of Old Japan. Bathed in the light of an oil lamp, a foreign but welcome innovation, their traditional grace had a delectable touch of almost Western vivacity. The individualistic stare of the present was still unknown in the demure eyes of the Meiji belles. The blending of the cultures of the East and West had just begun. Life, in all its aspects, was getting broader and held out to Japan hopes of an ever-increasing heritage for man. Thus life, art and Kiyokata could march abreast with the supple pace of youth.

Pretty women born of Kiyokata's brush show noticeable contrasts with those in Ukiyoye portraiture. Perhaps the most obvious is the absence in the former of some of the too aggressively seductive charms of the latter. Both sets of beauties were largely recruited from among the *filles de joie* of the gay precincts of Tokyo. In both groups of pictures the rendering of dainty kimono in inimitable colours has an important part in bringing out the fascinations of the subjects. And yet a marked difference exists. Where Utamaro, Harunobu and other masters of Ukiyoye gave free rein to provocative sensuality, the great portrait painter of today shows a more bridled charm. Kiyokata's creations do not suffer from his reserve, however. On the contrary, the seductive appeal

seems to gain radiance and refinement in its subdued expression.

It may be said that Ukiyoye provided the common people under the rigid rule of the Tokugawas with a sort of aesthetic escape. Of amenities of life they had few. As for opportunities of allowing free play to their initiative there were none. It was in such a contracted world that the now world-famous painters of Ukiyoye staged a riot of feminine charms in gorgeous colouring. It seems inevitable that seductive appeal, whether it took the form of surreptitious coquetry or of provocative abandon, should have supplied the keynote of works which were essentially meant to give a fillip of gaiety to the otherwise cheerless millions. The coming of the Era of Enlightenment, however, brought with it a new world where opportunities for achievement on the serious side of life were opened to all and the previous excesses in art had to be toned down to suit the altered mood of the public. In the new pictures "sex appeal" receded somewhat from its open challenge and blended itself with the grace, elegance, naturalness and other charms of womanhood, all of which find full expression in the painting of Kiyokata.

Illustrative of the point is his "Girls and

Flowers." Two girls are shown under a cherry tree in bloom. The sensitive record of beauty impresses one at once with the emancipated spirit of Meiji. One fails to see, perhaps not altogether without secret regret, that wild abandon which is familiar to every admirer of Ukiyoe. What suggestions of abandon Kiyokata imparts to the picture are of a much finer quality. Daintiness and good taste drape former nakedness and thus make the mood of abandon all the more adorable. By far the most striking points of the picture are the delicate colouring and designs of the kimono hanging loose from the shoulders of the girls. The writer, layman as he is, knows of no other artist who has done more justice to kimono than Kiyokata or been better able to breathe into them the piquant aroma of our lovely women. From the burning reds or vivid blues of *crépe-de-chine* "han-eri" down to the slightly-revealed hem of the "nagajuban," the kimono is depicted as a marvel of art.

Standing before the picture at a recent exhibition, the writer remembered a portrait he had seen years before. It was a photograph of a charming young lady whose clear eyes, pert lips and delicate nose bore a striking resemblance to the features of the girls on the wall. Upon reaching home,

he turned over the coincidence in his mind in his modest library, pulled out a number of art magazines, and hit upon a frontispiece showing Kiyokata and his wife. The little mystery was solved. Age records its work on the human form as faithfully as the noted artist records his conception of feminine charms on paper. But Mrs. Kiyokata seems to have stayed the hand of Time with exceptional firmness. All these intervening years have not blurred the obvious resemblance of Mrs. Kiyokata to the beauties in "Girls and Flowers" and to the snapshot which the writer had seen so many years ago.

## II. *Authoress from the Slums—Ineko Kubokawa*

It can be almost any city or town of industrial importance. Out beyond the streets of abundance one will always come upon a slum or welter of slums whose denizens are apparently down but not exactly out. Most people think for no good reason that a slum is a shocking plexus of evils brought on by unemployment. Nothing of the kind is a Japanese slum in these years of inflation. There all have work, some are lucky in having steady jobs while others are found holding down more restive ones by the scruff of their neck.

The houses of the workers, frail as they are, are constantly rocked as in an earthquake by the activities of countless factories run on a small scale and smaller profit. Prophetic of their claims on the means of living, the ground that supports irregular rows of drab, dilapidated wooden hovels is far from stable. Ugly patches of brownish water here and there in the neighbourhood would remind one that the site was not long ago a swamp and is today a poorly reclaimed makeshift perch



even for a slum. In these "districts beyond the reach of the sun," as proletarian writers would have them called, children are more familiar with work than with fun. Coming home from school, they are told to help their mothers put paste on the flaps of a stack of envelopes or paint paper balloons. The youngsters generally get down to work without grumbling, but of course their longings for fun and freedom are none the less keen. So early do they begin their apprenticeship for a life where a man's chief and only concern appears to them to consist in keeping every member of his family busy in an endeavour to scrape together a bare, cheerless existence for all. They have already ceased to be thrilled by a dream-land of childlike romance: they know at their tender age that the most distressing tragedy of man is to slave all through life to old age and remain poor.

It was in such a setting that Mrs. Ineko Kubokawa, our brilliant leftwing novelist, learned how to make match boxes as a nine-year-old daughter of a helpless father. And no wonder that her pen cuts like a rapier into the heart of poverty and her works always come as a revelation to the public which has long been hoodwinked by blatant lies about the poor. Jolly, wise-cracking drunks or folk who are soberly happy are not found in her

writings. She knows her people too painfully well to brook such "bunk."

In "A Bag of Cakes" Mrs. Kubokawa gives a vivid picture of a sunless area on the outskirts of Tokyo where children dance with joy at screeching sirens at noon. It means free lunch at school and holds out hope to the little ones under school age for a share in the repast for nothing. Some pupils may be kept out of school by a cold and such-like misfortunes and may perchance leave their rations in the benefit of other mouths. There is another familiar sound which brightens the anaemic faces of youth.

Almost daily hails from nowhere a wizened old man whose appearance on the scene is heralded by a sharp clapping of pieces of hard wood called "hyoshigi." He trundles a push-cart. On the vehicle is shown the most wonderful "Drama in Pictures"—a source of considerable excitement to both school children and their younger brothers and sisters. The show is thrown open to anyone who not only has but is willing to part with one red sen for admission and a paper bag of cheap nondescript sweets. These two, free lunch and an occasional taste of cakes and romance on moving slides, seem to sum up all the amenities that life in a slum can bestow on its youthful popula-

tion. Quite likely, the proletarian writer must have made most of the former blessing rather than the latter. But she was not allowed to finish her primary school education regardless of free lunch. She is self-taught, self-made and keeps her feet on the ground of realities like the passing generation of great American capitalists.

Her first contact with outstanding writers of fiction was made in her 'teens. But there was an interlude before the encounter was to take her by surprise.

Tokyo, especially around Ginza, is said to have more restaurants, cafés, tea-rooms, beer-shops and what not than any other spot on earth. Nevertheless, people, decent or otherwise, will find them closed after the zero hour. Either Tokyoites as a whole happen to be a people with exceptionally regular habits and spotless souls or the Metropolitan Police just imagine they are not. Anyway, here in the vast city a hungry citizen has to go hungry without redress after midnight. The only restaurants open all night are found to rest on wheels and it was behind the steaming kettle of one of those itinerant cafeterias that Mrs. Kubokawa kept herself busy for some years before her long-sought moment arrived. Up to the great earthquake-fire of 1923 a classy Japanese restau-

rant, Fukuju, used to be a favourite resort of the highlights in literature who in due course of time spotted out from among many waitresses a bright young girl. Her ideas and her way of expressing them soon convinced them of her talent. They gave her both moral support and letters of introduction to various publishers and her first story, a rousing success for a newcomer, appeared in a leading Tokyo magazine. It was a short sketch of a factory-girl.

All the same it made the police censor sit up with alarm over her telling plea for the proletariat. "Here we have an egg of radicalism," he muttered, annoyed, "Heaven knows what she would look like when hatched." She has been under police surveillance ever since. Even the rightful privacy during her honeymoon period was punctured by calls made by officers from headquarters. Ostensibly, they said they just looked in to see if the young couple had been spared from an epidemic or to get better acquainted with them. They took in with a quick sweep of their eyes symptoms of a hefty disease more dreaded by them than any known to medicine.

It is largely on the multiple forms of injustice to women in this country that she has fought tooth and nail. A number of times the bland visitors

from the police headquarters took the author to the detention cell which serves as a quarantine where mild cases of "dangerous thoughts" are cured and more seriously infected persons are given warnings of a severe treatment to follow.

The rigour of the war on radicalism, it should be noted in fairness to the guardians of the law, knows where and how to relax for good. They know exactly that, deprived of the chief breadwinner of the family even for a couple of days, her bed-ridden husband and two children would have to feel her absence acutely. Good sense, in the stringent circumstance, would get the upper hand of the cop-sense. The officer at the door of her cell would look with unusual intentness at a fly or dust on the little skylight, keeping his eyes off the occupant who he knows is rushing through page after page of another of her "feature stories." The news of its completion is tipped off to the publishers forthwith by the gallant watchman on the telephone. "The lady says," he would add, "the stuff is in 30 pages. You can figure out the price—I mean roughly—can't you? Good. I say, don't forget to bring the money when you come to call for it."

### III. Ichizo Kobayashi—The "Show King"

METAPHORICALLY speaking Mr. Ichizo Kobayashi walks on three legs instead of the usual two, his consisting of a ¥ 430,000,000 electric enterprise, a rapid-transit line noted for its speed in producing profits, and a powerful chain of theatres and movies. In plain words, he controls the Tokyo Electric Light Company, the Hankyu Electric Railway and the Takarazuka Theatres Incorporated as president of each. He does not amble about, however. Far from it. He is a quick thinker, a fast mover and, above all, a man of vision. His knack for publicity might well turn crack Hollywood propagandists purple with envy.

It could never have occurred to most men in business back in 1908 that the construction of a new line connecting Osaka with the port-city of Kobe through what were then but sparsely populated areas could be made to pay. The scheme which bobbed up in the mind of Mr. Kobayashi was roundly sneered at as a mushroom ready to be squelched by an early failure without even mak-

ing much of a noise. There was no sense, they thought, in proposing to parallel and enter into competition with the line operated at a profit by the Hanshin Electric Company. Had the doubters of what the future had in store for Mr. Kobayashi been able to feel the ribs of his apparently foolhardy plan, they might have earned handsome premiums on the shares of the Hankyu Company.

"Honourable Commuters," began an advertisement spread across a full page of every important newspaper for days in succession. "You all know what it means to ride on jammed cars in these warm days. Thanks to poor business, every train on our line is almost empty. By helping us with your patronage, you will be helping yourselves to luxurious seats and bracing, fresh, cool air. — The Hankyu Line." This odd appeal was penned by none other than the President himself. It turned out to be a big hit, so much so that the tide of commuters switched en masse from the Hanshin trains to the deserted ones of the Hankyu, "every train on our line" soon coming to be omitted from the advertised appeal. But people to this day have kept on riding without complaint on the crowded Hankyu trains no matter how like a dip in a Turkish bath they felt on entering them in the month of August. Strange is human nature

and its very strangeness seems to play into the hands of Mr. Kobayashi. Today the line is worth a good deal more than its paid-up capital of ¥45,000,000 and yields the fattest earnings ever known in Japanese railway history, either Government-owned or private.

Act II in his drama of "roughing it" in business opened on a large-scale amusement park built by Mr. Kobayashi at Takarazuka, with a theatre as the hub of the wheel of merriment. At first, the whole place was as empty of audiences as his noted trains had been of commuters. The flop, however, did not frighten him away from his pet axiom that success loiters round the corner as long as the good people living on the periphery of the Hankyu train service are dollar-wise and penny-foolish. In fact, it costs little money to turn youngsters loose in the department-store of fun. Fussy mothers were told to stop their worrying by doing so, as the juvenile, plastic minds of their children would be safe from any form of evil contamination at Takarazuka. The shows were clean, the animals in the zoo groomed and caged, the public bath built close to the theatre was the best of its kind. Again, at the sacrifice of his pennies during a few dull months after the opening of the place, he began to reap millions of pennies paid by mil-



lions of visitors into the ticket-offices of the railway as well as that spacious one at the entrance of the amusement park. His investment thus proved a twofold success.

"Takarazuka," translated literally, means "Entombed Treasures." The place-name had thus held out rewards for anyone who would only take the trouble to bring them back to life. The writer is not sure if Mr. Kobayashi has superstitions and shapes his decisions by taking them into account. What the writer knows for certain is that his rousing success in the amusement business by no means cloyed his appetite for yet more millions of pennies and for yet more theatres under his control. The upshot is that he has recently added to his theatrical chain two theatres and two picture houses right in the centre of Tokyo, with a combined capacity to accommodate 13,000 people.

Into the shrewd acumen of our "show king" has entered a new generation of theatregoers. The Japan he loves with infinite lavishness has an ever-increasing population. Moreover, she has instilled in them a joy for humming the popular melody from "The Merry Widow" and rattling their heels on the sidewalks as they march to their respective places of work. In a word, the younger generation constitute the audiences which Mr. Kobayashi

loves most. Kabuki is undoubtedly a wonderful show. A more artistic entertainment the stage, West or East, has never presented. It at least stands out as one of the premier types of stage art in the world. That much he admits, but he is more appreciative of the presence of youth who do not share his admiration for the great Kabuki. He knows that its old spell is rapidly palling. At the theatres in his control are shown sprightly revues, light comedies and operettas with the pick of the Takarazuka Girls gingering them all up with the pep of youth. Youth responds to youth, and there is no changing the law of gravitation. As the curtain falls to signal "good night" to the capacity audience at each of the Takarazuka theatres, there arises a riotous bedlam of appreciation accompanied by an avalanche of confetti, blue, red, yellow and white, thrown from every imaginable corner of the gallery onto the closing scene. It certainly is a lively finale. And needless to say, the warm reception delights Mr. Kobayashi who, thus encouraged, now proposes to create a Great White Way in the heart of Tokyo.

At the time of writing, his unguarded remarks about geisha girls have provoked a sensation here. In opening the newest of his theatres, the Yurakuza, he let it be known to the public that the

Takarazuka chain would not count on the patronage of "low-down" geisha as other establishments have done for ages. Whereupon the humiliated maidens showed their teeth in fierce resentment. Their contention, in fine, was that, not unlike any other definable body of people, there are both good and bad types among geisha, and that they could never permit so sweeping a damnation as Mr. Kobayashi's without protest. The protest has taken the form of a geisha boycott against every enterprise where Mr. Kobayashi has a final say. The most trenchant of them are said to have banned electric lights in their homes, remembering that the insulting person happens to sit on the Tokyo Electric Light Company as president. Whether candles and oil lamps have been revived in those homes to supplant the reprehensible T. E. L. was not known at the time of writing. Nor is it known as yet whether Mr. Kobayashi's drive for clean shows might not after all swell the volume of the kind of audiences he is after and possibly, along with them, their contented guardians.

#### IV. *Sojinkan Sugimura—The Doyen of the Press*

THROUGH the obvious channel, it was recently brought to the attention of the writer that some readers have been found somewhat critical—and some unkindly so—of his technique in etching off these rough sketches of Japanese personalities. Protest number one seems to be concerned with his incorrigible habit of beginning with long-winded, aimless, irrelevant “leads” with the alleged result that every person dealt with appears to be swaying under a massive head, tapering down to feet as invisible as those of a native ghost. More serious and harder to meet perhaps is protest number two which, in a word, charges that the author’s output invariably tastes like watered milk. The present article was written to satisfy these grievances. The readers and “the obvious channel” can see for themselves that it gives the cream, in all its thickness, of the writer’s intimate knowledge of Mr. Sojinkan Sugimura, doyen of the Japanese Press.

That Mr. Sugimura is now Auditor of the Asahi Publishing Company is immaterial. He was

born with a pen in his hand, naturally takes infinitely more delight in writing than passing on balance sheets, and will be a journalist through and through till the end of his brilliant career. But the trouble with him is that he possesses a range of versatility so far-flung and diversified that he can even fit into misfits with success.

He first made his mark as a columnist for a provincial paper at Wakayama, of which he became editor at twenty. Until his literary debut, it should be recalled, newspaper writing had been wallowing in the groove of a traditionalism of the most banal type. In everything from editorials, news and feature stuff down to weather reports, cut-and-dried Chinese expressions abounded — both to the distress of the but partly-educated stratum of the reading public and to the annoyance of the suburban intellectuals. There could be no wonder if a romance in society, as reported in the press of those days, had none of those thrilling touches which should seem inevitable to occurrences of the kind. A report on a murder sometimes got stranded over this Chinese phrase or that and failed miserably to depict to the readers the horror of the tragedy with what details were permissible to print. Moreover, the report often proved inaccurate.

Into the congealing arteries of journalism Mr. Sugimura infused a stream of new blood with all its freshness and animation. Typical of his feat in sponsoring a new style in journalism was the way he presented, in the pages of the *Asahi*, his first impressions of London.

Mr. Sugimura was sent to the British metropolis in 1907 as staff correspondent for the *Asahi* and as personal representative of the president of the paper. In the stories he sent back, he presented to the eyes of the people at home a London vitalized by the horn-tootings of the then still novel vehicle called an automobile, a parade of holiday-makers in their Sunday best, club life, etc. In short, his pen transformed London, for the Japanese, from a mere foreign name into a familiar scene seething with life, and in so doing, he demonstrated beyond doubt to both journalists and the lay public that the new school of newspaper writing, of which he was the Godfather, had vast advantages over the Chinese-ridden, flamboyant style of the past.

It was during this first visit in London that Mr. Sugimura struck up a friendship with Lord Northcliffe. At the special request of the latter, the young Japanese writer, simultaneously with his description of England and her people for the

Asahi, recorded in the columns of the Daily Mail how they looked in the mirror of a Japanese mind. Today we have a set of journalists who are capable of setting forth their views in English without either outraging the language or departing from what they mean to say. But they are of rather recent origin. In this strange byway of journalism, too, Mr. Sugimura may well be regarded as a pioneer.

The Japanese language is found by some to be stolid. Those who are familiar with French or English often point out that our tongue lacks a dash of vigour, grace of poise, and, above all, a shade of subtlety. A satire in Japanese, they say, has a way not only of hitting the object aimed at but of leaving in him or her a germ of acrimony for years afterward. To these critics the writer recommends Mr. Sugimura's works. They will realize anew how agile Japanese is, or can be. Of satire Mr. Sugimura is chock full. But his are shots which stop just an inch away from the mortal spot. "Shichika Hachiretsu," the best known of his books, was banned by the official censors only some years after it had been published. The same authorities had to read the book over and over again before they could pin down his gibe at the earners of unearned increments.

## V. *The Queen of the Screen—Takako Iriye*

ASAKUSA, Tokyo's play-ground for adults, comes to life nightly with the coming of the lights. Tawdry posters of cinema stars in "close-up" scenes flaunt themselves across the fronts of buildings, acting as sure decoys to promenaders. Flags in hundreds announcing the features of the shows wave and beckon in the flash of multiple electric rays. Torn paper bags, cigarette stubs, remains of what were refreshments—cheap trappings of showland, which shrink away from the unsparing sun—are forgotten and forgiven after dusk.

Even a sophisticate is tempted to look on Asakusa by night as a home for his soul to riot in. The boy in him seems to expand. Caught unawares, he perchance finds himself harangued by a most rapacious banana-monger. "Folks, I carry all kinds of bananas fresh from all climes and from all lands. This particular evening only, mind you, you can have them almost for nothing. I'll tell you why—." At this point, the stroller would beat a hasty retreat to a more quiet recess



in the street of lavishly-illuminated movie theatres. There, as often as not, he sees a dolorous old woman standing behind a row of steaming pyramids of boiled eggs, selling at ten sen a pile. Yes, Asakusa and Cheapness are twins born of Mother Night. What seems more to the point is that the price of admission to the movies there suits the flattest of pockets.

One evening, the writer resolutely set himself against the lure of bananas and boiled eggs to seek out the noted cinema-star, Miss Takako Iriye, on the screen. "A Messenger from the Moon" featuring her in the title rôle was running in one of the theatres, leaving other current attractions breathless and stunned at this most rousing of film hits in recent months. The visit taught the writer many things which he had neglected before. On several occasions, it is true, he had been asked to chaperon his two budding daughters to the movies to see Garbo, Bow, or Sten. Talkies of the kind, the girls insisted, might help polish up their spoken English. The writer could not help registering a futile protest at this, telling them that the vigorous language escaping from between the set teeth of Miss Bow or Miss Sten had once flourished at speak-easies and tough "joints" in the Bowery and was not meant for use

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by Japanese ladies with a samurai family tree to hark back to.

But until he saw the native cinema that night, the writer had been rather skeptical of the tabulated statement that, of the two hundred million Japanese cinema-goers in a year, more than 80 per cent. prefer home-made motion pictures to the imported ones. The big patronage of the former, he was told, came about chiefly due to the advent of Hollywood talkies. Outside of a limited audience bent on "improving" their spoken English, most people would naturally react with readier enthusiasm to films in an intelligible language than they would to gushes of a foreign jargon. The explanation should be convincing to anyone, all the more so to those who make profits by selling films to this movie-addicted country.

To return to "A Messenger from the Moon," Miss Takako Iriye, the undisputed queen of film stardom in Japan, was perfectly at ease in the starched uniform of a hospital nurse. It was not difficult to imagine that some pulmonary case in the sanatorium where she worked, shut out from the world, should fall in love with the sweet soul. One could also tell from the beginning of the drama where such an affair, once started, was to end—the girl takes her own life for the happiness

of her lover and his fiancée. But the reel took a noted doctor by surprise. He is Dr. F. Masaki, a specialist in lung diseases. He runs a sanatorium which in every detail corresponds with the scene of the screen romance. The upshot of it all was that, since the exhibition of the film, thither came patients, real or feigned, in such great numbers that at one time Dr. Masaki actually thought of building a new annex to accommodate the applicants.

Miss Iriye looks even prettier with her screen make-up and outfit removed, so the writer was informed by a fervent fan of hers. The informant had hit upon a clever ruse of breaking through the barrier of her secretaries. "My wife," he pleaded with them, "is about to give birth to a child. It may be a girl. Now, I know something about prenatal training. I should like to see Miss Iriye and ask her for her picture for the good of the baby." The secretaries could not very well turn him out, so he won through to the celestial presence. With the lucky fan's testimony that Miss Iriye is easily the most beautiful girl in Japan the writer has no reason to disagree.

Miss Iriye comes from an old aristocratic family as her real name, Miss Hideko Higashi-Bojoh, indicates. Born in Tokyo as the third

daughter of the late Viscount Higashi-Bojoh, she spent her early girlhood in her father's official residence in the Imperial Castle-Palace. Her personal charms, noble bearing and birth, and a *flair* for acting almost led her by the nose to stardom, according to the informant. She is unusually tall for a Japanese woman and plays her varying rôles with a blithe adaptability which only youth can command. She is in her early twenties. On top of these unsurpassed qualities as a star, Miss Iriye probably occupies a unique place in the world of the cinema: she presides over the Iriye Productions which she owns and operates.

Most of the pictures she has made famous by her winsome art are "clean." Expensive cars slow down in front of the halls showing them. High-brow mothers permit their sub-deb daughters to go to Asakusa to see her shows, confident that the thrills they get will not be of a nature to menace their morals. And if Miss Iriye has many fans among men, she has countless more of her own sex, as the latter accept her as the visualized ideal of the modern girl of Nippon.

## VI. *Gumpei Yamamuro—A Pioneer Social Worker*

It is not at all surprising that Mr. Gumpei Yamamuro, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Salvation Army, looks prematurely spent at the age of 63. In his case, if in any, each year of actual life should be reckoned its double considering the exacting tax taken of him by a war that knows no truce. Indeed, it is puzzling in the extreme how the Commissioner has been able to defy, without suffering even more serious consequences, the staunch and proven faith of the twentieth century in such a standard recipe as eight hours' sleep and three meals a day. He was born poor, faced days without food and often nights without a bed to sleep in. The pains of poverty which he felt at their sharpest in his youth seem only to have developed in him a mysterious power of resistance and a fervent sympathy for the poor. Thus it was from his own destiny and experience that the summons came to devote his life to the cause which he has led with exceptional singleness of purpose for the past forty years.

vow. Before she died at the age of 71, she confided in Gumpei that the burden of her invocations to the deities on his behalf was that he might grow up into "useful manhood" — useful for the good of his fellow-men.

Not a whit less profound was the public spirit dwelling in the heart of Gumpei's overworked farmer-father, Saihachi. One may well wonder how a man and wife so hard beset by circumstance could have managed to keep any sort of public spirit alive at all. The world has been but recently awakened to the importance of Japan's working people as a mainstay of her national life. A new eulogy in honour of our proletariat will someday be penned when their spiritual values have been more deeply explored:

In any case, the young Gumpei received a better education than the circumstances would ordinarily have been expected to permit. At nine, moreover, he became heir by adoption to his uncle's fortune part of which consisted—significantly enough—of a pawnshop. It was here that the boy's longing to aid the poor came into play for the first time. Of nights, he would pore over the accumulated stubs of pawn-tickets and make personal calls on those whose pledged belongings were due to be auctioned off. It was here, too,

that he sadly beheld women pawning their babies' clothes to procure money with which to buy food. A pawnshop in Japan, or in any country for that matter, provides a spy-glass through which one can obtain a surprisingly accurate picture of the poor. Yamamuro fretted over his helplessness during this period of his direct contact with the third estate.

In 1889 Gumpei, now a lad of thirteen, took French leave of the pawnshop and went to Tokyo to acquire more education so that he could prove himself more "useful." With this adventure began days without food and nights innocent of rest. The first job he found in the city was that of a "boy" at a printer's shop not far from where the noble building housing the Salvation Army Headquarters stands today. Motley were the people with whom the young Yamamuro had to work in the shop, and more inscrutable were their ways after office hours. It did not take long for him to realize the marked difference between the city poor and the poor he had been familiar with back home. Soon a new conviction began to take root in his mind: it was not enough to do what he could to mitigate the material needs of the urban hard-ups, something must also be done to stir in them the finer qualities of man. It was not until



several years later that he saw the realization of his desire in the work of the Salvation Army.

Late in 1895, Yamamuro received a commission in the great charitable organization. At that time the whole force in Japan consisted of a few English officers and a handful of recruits. Two desks and four chairs cramped together in a small room represented the G. H. Q. Today, the Japanese Salvation Army's work is being carried on by a higher staff of 533 men and women, and despite the present wane in the tide of religious faith everywhere, the organization enlists some six thousand new souls yearly. What the Army has done for the poor since the new leaven represented by Gumpei Yamamuro was thrown into the modest loaf is now common knowledge. In a word, it has set in motion every imaginable device in the field of social welfare work way ahead of all other charity organizations.

By far the warmest tribute to this friend of the downtrodden, however, goes to him by reason of his campaign against organized vice. Licensed houses of prostitution have long been entrenched in Japanese law. Commissioner Yamamuro had to reckon not only with this legal obstacle but also with the added fact that the brothel-owners were prepared to use violence to paralyse any at-

tempt at freeing the unfortunate women in their clutches. Night after night the intrepid officer led a "rescue" party into the heart of the enemy's territory. The fight dragged on for years with increasing risks to the emancipators until, one night, the leader was wounded on the head. The scar remains there to this day. Mr. Yamamuro is mighty proud of it and regards it as a high decoration more valuable than any which some crowned head might have bestowed upon him. Hundreds of women were removed from their thralldom as a result of his efforts and were thus able to begin life anew. In any event, fallen angels are now given the comforting assurance that the Salvation Army will not fail those who seek a way out.

Most of us are honestly skeptical of miracles. But the solid phalanx of achievements which Commissioner Yamamuro, now spent and haggard, has to his credit, seems to stand out as something very much like one. It speaks well for God and man.

## VII. *General Count Terauchi as War Minister*

If you don't have to go to a barber's shop to get a hair-cut, you have ceased to be a "nobody." It will have clapped on you a mark of distinction beyond the easy access of persons with an idle tongue at least.

One morning, some twenty years ago, a barber was seen at work on a bald head in the home of the Terauchis. Onto the scene of domestic peace enters an army officer, a kinsman of the family. He comes abruptly to a halt within a few paces from where the scissors are clicking over a head of peculiarly odd shape.

"My word!" exclaims the kinsman, much impressed by his chance discovery. "It's amazing how that dome of yours tapers into a point like the tip of a shell. It's just like that of your . . ."

"Father," the owner of the head under review interrupts as he turns round to face the inhospitable critic. And imagine the latter's consternation when he finds himself confronted not by the son but by Marshal Count Masatake Tera-

uchi himself, the illustrious father of our present Minister of War.

"It's all right," the old soldier hastened to reassure the intruder. "I am glad you took me for my son."

On this slender point of likeness between father and son I find my cartoonist-friend, Kanzo-san, labouring with the same perseverance as the artist with the busy scissors described above. The artist with pen and ink casts sour, murderous glances over a number of sketches of the new War Minister tossed at random all over his desk.

"I'll bet," he grumbles, "that no one will recognize him in these darn unlikenesses. We did just about everything to his father—pinched his nose, swelled up his cheeks, ploughed furrows across his brow—and yet people could readily recognize who it was, you remember? But General Terauchi is and will be the despair of our craft. He looks too normal to invite bold touches of the cartoonist's pen."

Old timers of the Press are found equally mystified by the unknown soldier. They know everything, or so they say, about his father, the Marshal, who as Minister of War for ten years, worked out a plan of operations months, or possibly years, ahead of the Russo-Japanese War and

saw it hatch into ultimate victory; who as Governor-General of Korea, wove that land into the woof and warp of the Empire; and who, finally, formed a cabinet in his own right only to have it smashed by the shock of the Rice Riot of 1918. They tell you that one of the greatest hits in the history of cartoondom came off when an impolite artist sketched the old Field Marshal as Billiken, "god of things as they ought to be." The resemblance was thought so strikingly real that it seemed to bring out the ideological affinity of the two. Of his son, however, the reportorial habitués of the War Office admit they know next to nothing. General Terauchi, they will tell you, had steadfastly been denied key posts in Tokyo until Fate suddenly made him War Minister in March as a belated apology.

A visit to the morgue of newspaper clippings leaves no doubt as to his utmost sincerity, a noble heirloom in his veins. The second month of the World War found him clinking tumblers of beer in Berlin with a group of German officers. He was about to leave for Japan which, the Germans felt, would almost certainly throw in its lot with them in the event of Japanese participation in the conflict.

"Meine Herren," came from the chubby-

faced Japanese, "should my country choose to fight on your side, you'll see me again warming our friendship over glasses of champagne."

Japan crossed the Rubicon, but not to the German side as General Terauchi's friends in Berlin had expected. The promise he had given, however, remained a thorn in his side. Champagne in adequate quantity to satisfy the combined capacity of hefty young officers would cost more money than he could afford. He went to his father for "advice," got the necessary funds and sent them to the Germans, telling them in the P.S. of an accompanying letter that the rolling dice of fortune had made it impossible for him to drink his share of the champagne in their company.

The clippings also agree that, regardless of his rotation from one job to another mostly on the road, promotions bore him upward in the ranks as smoothly as a man riding a well-oiled escalator. He was born in 1879 as the first son of the great Marshal. That simple fact alone might have gone far to set the escalator running smoothly, but the excerpts on hand take exception, categorically, to such speculation. They spot out the unmistakable makings of a great army leader. He, they assert, has none of the terrible

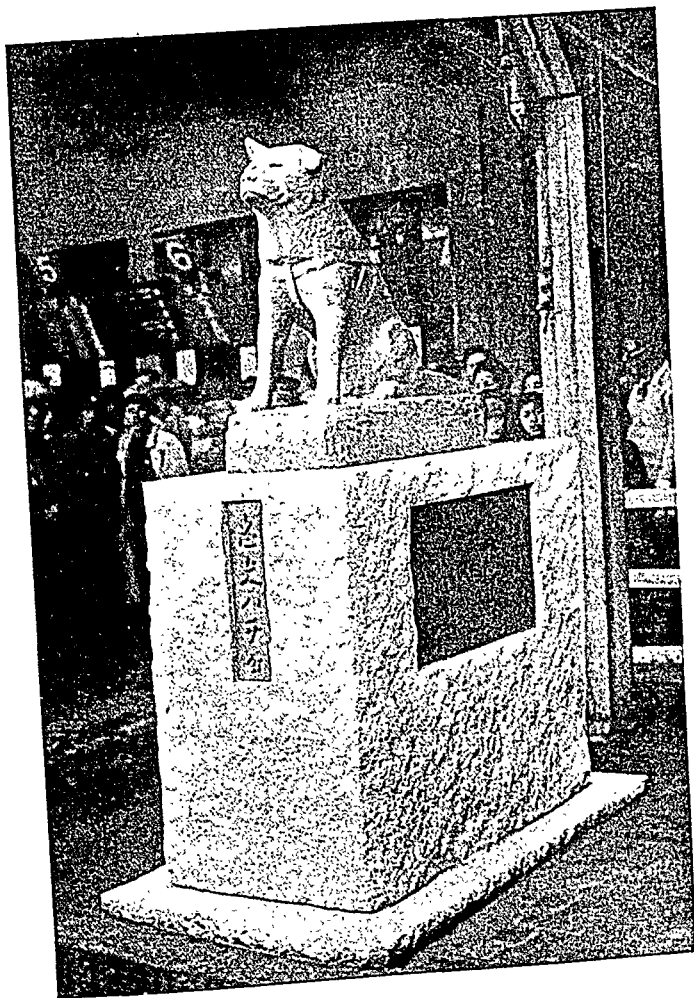
self-assertive temper of other leaders, including his father. His is an open mind ready to listen to wise counsels. A person of his disposition will not have a domineering superiority complex whatever other vices he may be guilty of. And military leadership in Japan at the present moment is reputed to be groaning under an overpopulation of I-know-better-than-you's.

General Terauchi's innocence of an aggressive ego does not mean that he hasn't the desired backbone. On the contrary, continue the clippings, once his mind is set, the iron will of his father seems to resurge in him. History testifies to the truth that a man with an open mind plus honest heart generally turns out to be the most difficult of all men to sway from his decisions. A man of this stamp does not know the art of dodging just accountability for his actions, and our new War Minister falls plump in this category. He speaks out his mind and leaves nobody in doubt as to what he means to say. As often as not his unhesitating self-expression may provoke controversies, and yet few people, if any, acquire from him malignant wounds to nurse afterward. What admirable equipment for a man who has to shoulder the duties of War Minister at a time like the present! Generals Araki, Hayashi and

Kawashima in succession sought, each according to his respective lights, to harness the overflowing energies of the army, and they failed. General Terauchi proposed in a recent speech to go ahead just where his predecessors got stranded. He said in substance :

“Political affiliations by individual officers run counter to the assigned duties of the soldier. Moreover, in the end, their political ambitions will betray their object. The army’s desire in connection with the national administration will find expression through the prestige of the Army and the nation’s confidence in it.”





The Hachi-koh memorial

## I. *Magic Ashes—A Native Fairy Tale Retold*

ONCE upon a time, as all wonderful tales for Japanese children should properly begin, there lived an old farmer and his wife. They led a simple life on their little farm which yielded them rice, vegetables and contentment. Of complaints about life they had none. At times, however, they thought it could have been happier had they had a child: they were childless. On a dog, naturally, the couple poured the affectionate care they had been denied to lavish on a youngster of their own. "White" was the name of the pet. Of course, the dog had everything it could wish for.

It so happened that one day "White" was found unusually frolicsome. It wagged its tail, danced about and barked with a note of mystery. Finally, apparently overcome by excitement, the animal held the hem of the old man's kimono between its teeth and hurried him willynilly to a corner of his farm. There, giving another hearty outburst of joy, it did all it could to impart to human understanding that there was something wonderful buried in the earth. The farmer soon

gathered what the odd behaviour of his pet meant. He remembered as he fetched out a spade from the barn the old saying that a dog cherishes in its heart the memory of a kind man even if their association as master and pet lasted but three days.

Well, his estimation of the canine virtues came true. The first stroke of the spade told him beyond doubt that the earth held in its bosom something hard—hard as metal. The second stroke bared a piece of gold. A gold coin rested on his palm shaking with astonishment. Now, with a will did he labour with the spade and, to his great amazement, every stroke brought him more coins. As you must have guessed as much already, he ran almost out of breath to his dwelling to break the news to his good wife, enjoining all the while her co-operation in unearthing the hidden treasure. The upshot was, as you can also well imagine, that the couple became rich—a not unwelcome addition to their happiness together.

Is there any wonder if neighbours are sometimes found as different from one another as Hamlet's ill-fated father was from Claudius, his own brother and a black villain? Well, on the nearby farm, as our story goes, lived another old man and his wife, a perfect match in greed and ruthlessness. In a tale of this kind good news is

made to keep pace with evil news. The wicked couple had no love for their two neighbours and their dog. "White" was often shooed away from their doorstep, and as often got beatings for no reason at all. If the grasping farmer called upon the kind farmer neighbour with the request that he would like to keep "White" for a while, he was of course after gold coins which might be buried somewhere on his farm. But the experiment rewarded him with nothing but sweat on his brow and a heap of broken tiles which he dug up. Thereupon, in a frenzy, he killed the poor dog. The good farmer's heart sank within him upon hearing the sad report. Did he revile the killer with angry words which the latter certainly deserved? No. He saw there was nothing he could do to bring the dead dog back to life. The most he could do was to ask the bad man to give him the tree under which "White" was said to be buried. The request was granted. He carved out of it a mortar and a pestle for preparing rice cakes. Soon December waned and the kind farmer and his wife set about making rice cakes for the approaching New Year's Day.

The mortar recently carved out of the tree, still strongly reminiscent of the poor dog, wrought another miracle. Rice pounded by the man and

wife in turn seemed not only to increase in amount but to well up from the hollow of the mortar. And such marvellously delicious rice cakes as these the couple could not remember ever having eaten before.

Again, the avaricious neighbour got wind of the magic power of the mortar and pestle and borrowed them to get "mochi" out of nothing. Again he saw nothing but an ugly heap of broken tiles coming out endlessly from the bottom of the pounding vessel. This time he broke up both mortar and pestle and used them as kindling. A few days afterward, the good farmer was told that the only relic he had in the world to remember the dead creature by was now in ashes. Yet no provocations could incite the good-natured old man to anger. With polite acquiescence, he trotted home with a bucketful of the ashes and no doubt with a heavy heart, little suspecting what further surprises lay in store for him and his wife.

By accident, he spilled some of the contents of the bucket in his garden. In a fraction of a second, those cherry-trees, plum-trees and other flower-bearing plants on which the ashes fell seemed to sprout young buds which, in another fraction of a second, burst into full bloom—in winter!

It was not long before the streets of a town

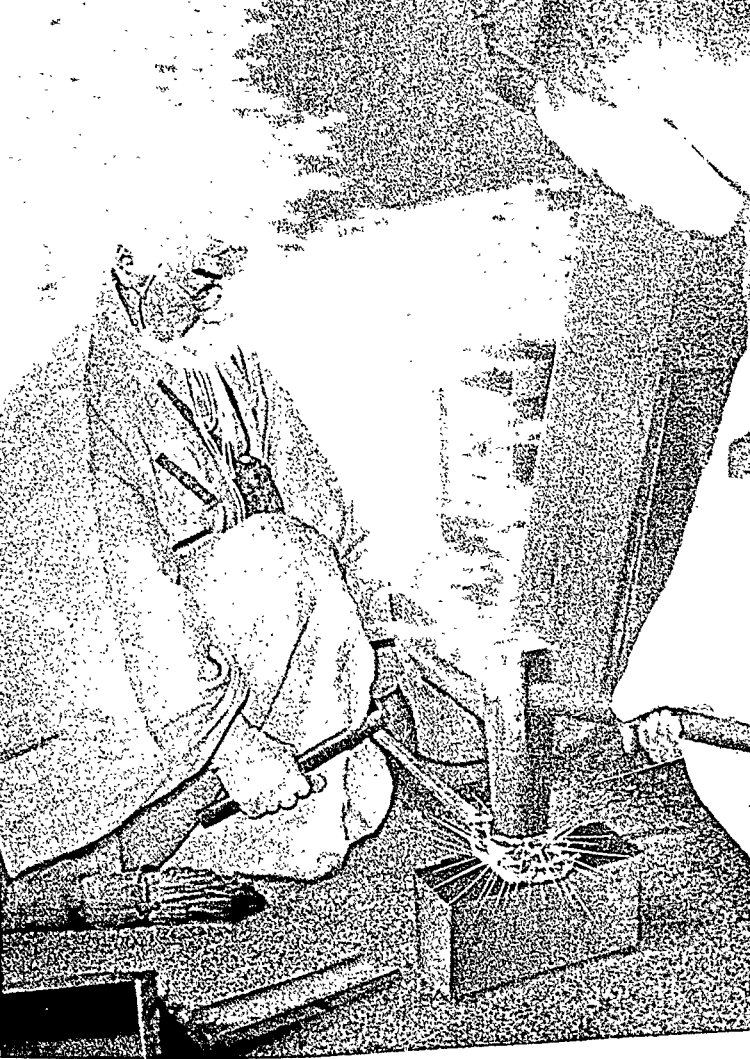
where a wealthy lord lived in his noble castle saw a smiling old man announcing with a merry voice the wonders of "The Magic Ashes." "Buy, buy," the farmer shouted, for it was the same good farmer, as he walked down every street and lane of the town, "here goes the vendor of an infallible cure for dead trees which will burst into flower with a wee little touch of his remarkable ashes." The news was brought to the lord, who happened to be worried about one of the ancestral cherry-trees that was falling into decay. The farmer had the thrill of his life when he beheld high up in the tree, no longer the dead branches that had been there a minute before, but branches heavy with bright, magnificent clouds of blossoms. His lordship stood agape with wonder and admiration at the grand spectacle. That day, the farmer could be seen struggling home under the load of a handsome reward from the lord.

The unscrupulous neighbour grew green with envy for the third time. And for the third time, his attempt to reap rewards at the expense of the faithful dog and its kind master ended in a failure. He roared himself hoarse until he was ushered in to the presence of the lord. But the ashes he scattered about only half blinded the nobleman and sent him to prison on a serious charge.

## II. *The Japanese Sword—An Appreciation*

THOUGH somewhat lacking in articulateness, the majority of Japanese women show their aversion to arms. They know that they stand, or should stand, for peace. Were it not for their protestations in this vein, the present popularity of Japanese swords as objects of art might well develop into a rage, relegating connoisseurs of painting, sculpture and the other less martial arts to the position of banal wasters. Even with the gentle guardians of peace standing in the way, the fad for Nipponese swords has received such a vigorous stimulus from the restless mood of these years that a rare find is said to bring a fat price of ¥ 20,000 or more.

Broadly speaking, there are three stages in the life of an admirer of things adorable, so the writer was recently informed. Painting, being an easily visible form of art, becomes the first attraction with him. By the time he feels he has gone far enough into the depth of the lure thereof, he begins to get enamoured of a more sober and im-



Shintoism in tempering sword-blades



penetrable art, calligraphy, which, according to the informant, serves to keep him enthralled over a much longer period than painting. Then comes the third and consummating stage—appreciation of a sword smelted, tempered and signed by some famed swordsmith of old.

Writes Captain Taketomi in an ode to the cold steel with an exemplary sharp edge on it: "An old Japanese sword is a genuine work of art which was created by the swordsmith in an inspired state of body and mind. It has nothing in common with any modern industrial article manufactured for gain in a limited space of time and at the least possible cost of production." Here, for the hundredth time, the writer can perceive the same train of thought that seems to go far in determining the relative value of almost everything in this country. All that comes from a man "in an inspired state of mind and body" bars both criticism and reception with qualifications. In the main, the criterion has seldom failed us, and in telling a really fine sword from a bad one, we have no other standard to fall back upon. It should be pointed out in passing that almost every masterpiece in this distinguished branch of the cutlery family has the autograph of its maker engraved on the hilt, whereas the cornerstones of none of

our noble buildings, old or new, record the names of their creators, an injustice which we have just begun to rectify.

A dazzling blade stretching forth from a sword-guard worked with wonderful floral designs in cloisonné is undoubtedly a thing of beauty regardless of a premonition, or the distant memory, of a bloodshed which it inspired. The writer has sought in vain to reconcile the homicidal intent implied by the remarkably keen edge of the weapon with the charms of Nature depicted in the decorative designs extending from the pommel of the hilt down to the ferrule of the scabbard. The contrast is, indeed, too striking to be explained away.

Many a weird story, sometimes tragic and sometimes absurdly farcical, has always been associated with masterpieces from the anvils of old craftsmen. To cite one of them, a sword wrought by Muramasa, a famous swordmaker of the 15th century, is said to possess an unquenchable thirst for blood. Alive with the militant spirit of the maker, it would, according to legend, writhe and fret in its scabbard in a spell of inaction. The bearer of the sword often succumbed to the sinister insinuation and was moved to a duel or an outright murder without the least provocation.

Of quite another kind are the swords from the forge of Masamune, under whom Muramasa received his first lessons in the calling. The Masamune blades have the fullest measure of the true significance and ideals attributed to any Japanese sword of worth: they reputedly impel their wearers to accomplish their aims without unsheathing their death-dealing weapons. A certain analogy is seen by some between the charms of the swords in question and the idea of "peace by armaments" which has many loyal supporters the world over.

Macabre but not lacking in humour is the story of a huge sword treasured at the Yahiko Shrine at Niigata. From hilt to point the blade measures about seven feet. A samurai with Herculean arms was able, so the story goes, to mow down a dozen men with a single sweep of the lusty weapon. A more credible version has it that the mammoth sword was in truth a rank "bully" in steel. Its chief purpose was to spell terror to the enemy before hostilities were begun.

Because of the costliness of the fad, collectors of rare swords are necessarily confined to the wealthier classes. Premier Takeshi Inukai, who fell a victim of the notorious May 15th Incident, was one of the best known connoisseurs and collectors. The extraordinary courage with which

the leader faced his end might well have resulted in part from his fond association with the spiritual attributes of his collection. Above all else, a good Japanese sword derives its worth from the fact that it has long been regarded, by common consent, as a symbol of Bushido. It can withstand, unafraid, the shock of heavy blows without breaking or bending. Within an inch of death Premier Inukai sought to enlighten his assailants on the chaotic affairs of the State in 1932. "Young men," said the dying statesman, "there is nothing fundamentally askew with our country. Let me explain . . ." He did not live to finish his explanation. He died but met death with an amazing presence of mind which was neither twisted nor broken, like the good Nipponese blades he had admired.

The writer can recall his embarrassment in the presence of a naked steel blade with a marvelously cold lustre and an expert judge on the subject. He meant well when he ventured his humble opinion on the obvious effectiveness of a blow with it. That, he was corrected, was not the right approach to proper appreciation. To qualified eyes the sword should bare a wealth of details of the historical background of the period in which the blade was forged. When the country enjoyed

a long holiday from civil wars, elegance and finesse were given prominence in the products of the smithy. With the country in the grip of strife, the samurai gave preference to heavier and more effective weapons. — Furthermore, a glance at the shape and other technical details of a sword should properly raise a *tableau vivant* of its courageous wearer in full battle array performing one of the deeds which made his blade go down in history.

But all these angles are beyond the reach of a layman such as the writer admits he is. He is content to sum up the results of his casual survey by saying that our admirers of art, be it painting or swords, seem to pursue a singular course of progress. They begin with an art whose beauty lies in complexity and end up with another the apparent simplicity of which has a far more enduring charm than all the rest.

### III. *In Memoriam the Canine Loyalty of Hachi-koh*

OF the various charges of perfidy the most undeserving, I think, is the one that involves the dogs. How they came to be regarded as indicative of an abject collapse of our morals and well-being no one has even bothered to find out. Nor are there proofs to bear out the sustained slight. I have always felt it to be an injustice, at once mean and incomprehensible, done to the best of companions for man. The following story of a noble dog whose loyalty toward its master to the last seems to put to shame some of us and particularly those who first coined the phrase "to go to the dogs." That I am all for the animal with its noble qualities can be seen in a somewhat singular attempt to link up the dog with my Fatherland. I await the award of the reader on whether the two remote existences hang together.

The story concerns a dog with a hundred per cent. Japanese pedigree. "Hachi-koh" was its name. So great was the affection of its master, a college professor in Tokyo, for the sprightly little

fellow that he was always seen in its company on his daily walks to and from the hardby railway station at Shibuya. The dog, standing almost tip-toe on the platform, barked its greetings on his departures and arrivals by train. Neither rain storms in Summer nor keen edged Winter's onslaughts could dampen the spirit of the faithful servant. And months sped and years rolled by until one day train after train stopped at the familiar scene without bringing the professor. Of the truth that he had been sent to Germany to pursue his studies Hachi-koh had no means of knowing. With its ears erect and nostrils dilated it followed the beat with a steadfastness which brought tears to the eyes of many commuters. In the meantime, a worse calamity befell the unsuspecting animal. The professor died in Germany. The sad news, though unknown to the poor companion, seemed to gray its fur. Its daily trips to the station with the now frenzied hope of meeting its master never ceased, nevertheless. It emaciated visibly. The straight, pointed ears peculiar to its breed sagged and flapped idly with the dejection of a flag at half-mast. One evening, so the story goes, the station-master was alarmed at the sight of the prostrate animal fixing its lifeless gaze at the busy trains.

The report of the death of "Hachi-koh, the Faithful" as it is now called was brought to public attention by the Press. Posthumous honours, including a life-size statue of the fallen pet in bronze, came from hundreds of understanding citizens of Tokyo. Day in and day out, the Shibuya railway station gathers and releases thousands of men and women who in their hurry cast admiring glances at the Hachi-koh Memorial as they scurry past the turn-stiles. Tender hands pile up handfuls of biscuits, cakes and forget-me-nots on the pedestal in grazed granite.

Since the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1921, the nation has turned to the dead letter with an singularly doglike devotion. The elation with which they greeted the arrangement for closer union of the two peoples in 1902 still thrills our hearts. They remember the set phrase "The Alliance as the best insurance of peace in the Far East and as the basis of our foreign policy" which recurred in the addresses by our Government leaders on unnumbered occasions. To their memory comes unbidden the promptness with which Japan rushed help to her brother when the great war lashed the world in 1914. The Chancelleries in the sophisticated West are too heavily draped with thick curtains



to be alive with minds sensitive enough to realize the emotional response of our Oriental people to a pact of friendship. In the calculations of the chancellors this human aspect of diplomacy has never had its weight felt. Japan looked to the treaty of alliance with the fondness of a life-long companion and even today most Japanese treasure the memory of the dead letter as warmly as the faithful canine hero is said to have treasured that of its master in its haunt to the railway station at Shibuya.

THE END

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